TRAILS, TRAPPERS AND TENDER-FEET IN WESTERN CANADA

STANLEY WASHBURN

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Mount Robson towers above the trail, its peak ever enveloped in the passing clouds.

Trails, Trappers, and Tender-feet In the New Empire of Western Canada

By STANLEY WASHBURN

With 80 Illustrations from the Author's Photographs

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To My Wife

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Where the roads of men are ended, where stands the last crude shack,
Where the mountains raise their barriers and the tenderfoot turns back;
Where there's nought ahead but Nature, and there's no such word as fail,
Where the well-worn ways are ended—'tis here begins the trail.

* * * * *

And the man of the trail is the man of the wild, a creature unrecking and bold.
The trappers of fur, the hunters of game, or, perchance, the searchers of gold
Are the men who have starved and suffered, in the wilderness hewing a way,
And the trail they trod but yesterday is an empire's path to-day.

STANLEY WASHBURN.

NOTE. — For a dozen of the illustrations used in this book the author begs to thank his friends of the trail, Dr. August Eggers, Messrs. Frank Reading, Fred Stevens, E. C. Thurston and Arthur Phillips, for their courtesy in permitting reproduction.

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TRAILS, TRAPPERS AND TENDERFEET IN THE NEW EMPIRE OF WESTERN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

THERE have been so many volumes of campfire, wilderness and "roughing it" stories written these last few years, that the writer feels almost apologetic in adding another to the vast list with which the much abused public is already surfeited. But there are two reasons why it has seemed worth while to present these pages to that portion of the reading world that cares for such things. The first is, that the greater part of the wilderness with which this unpretentious little book deals, is that particular bit of the wilds which is now swiftly melting before the advance of the Grand Trunk Pacific, Canada's new trans-continental railroad, that is being driven with sledge-hammer blows through the heart of the Rockies on the last lap of its journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This vast stretch of almost unknown country has defied for untold centuries the advance of civilization by its natural barriers, which have excluded all but the trappers and Indians. Great mountain walls,

deep canyons, and swift-flowing rivers have been the guardians of the peace and silence that all these years have left this great potential Empire almost as God made it.

But the roar of overland traffic will soon replace the murmur of the winds in the tree-tops, and the country "as it has been since the beginning" will be a thing of the past. To the tens of thousands who within a few years will see this bit of Canada from the rear end of an observation car, these little sketches of it all, before the coming of the steel for ever wiped out the silence of the wilderness, may prove of passing interest. This must be my first excuse for my presumption in writing these pages.

The second reason may seem entirely unjustified, for it is strictly a personal gratification in giving expression, after many years, to that deep-rooted feeling of fascination which the wilderness works on those who know and love it. Deep, deep down within my consciousness there sings to me these many nights the song of rippling rivers, that flow in unnamed valleys that I know. A hundred camp-fires, that have gladdened me so many, many nights in the years gone by, in forest and in mire, and again beneath the shadows of far-flung snow-fields, cast upon the canvas of my mind the flicker of their friendly light. The endless miles of trail that have led me far from the haunts of men, through

strange wildernesses and among distant peaks, and that have spelled such peace to me so many cloudless nights of sweet serenity, whisper to me in my dreams that I dedicate to them a few words of recognition for the balm and peace they have erstwhile spread upon me. Within these mountain fastnesses, there roam a handful of men "With hearts of vikings and the simple faith of the child." These men, for many years, have I known and loved. I have sat with them beside these deep and silent-flowing rivers, and I have listened to the philosophy of simple living and genuine religion, which lives, close to nature, have taught them. These, and a thousand days and nights beneath the stars, sing to me for recognition, and so it is, in defiance of the superfluity of similar material, that I take up my task to trace in an aimless but intimate way the wanderings of some six summers spent in the mountains of Alberta and British Columbia. Five thousand miles of trail have known the hoofs of my pack-trains, and hundreds of miles of rivers have seen the ripples clinging to the sterns of my canoes within these years. Some game have I shot and some fish have I caught. Many rivers have I forded and some have I swum. Vast peace have I enjoyed, and many hardships and some risks have been encountered and overcome. But it is not from any of these things that I would take my text,

for each in itself is of no importance, for there are dozens and hundreds of men who have done more of all these things than I have. If readers there be, who follow the trail of these pages, it is not for new data of natural history that they must look, nor is it for any story of great adventure, or personal achievement, for of such there is none. This small volume is a brief recognition of the love I bear the mountains and the denizens thereof, both the human and the animal. It is a little picture of the wilderness before man came to tear his path of empire through its vitals.

If I can reconstruct for others the atmosphere of peaceful serenity which nature has so often shed upon my soul, then, indeed, will my efforts be justified. If not,—well, I shall at least have made the attempt and my conscience will forever be silenced of its constant murmurings, bidding me take up a task that for years I have shirked. This, then, is my second reason.

If the general public read and approve my book, I shall be pleased ; but, even if they do not, yet are there a few trapper and prospector friends scattered throughout the wilderness who will read these pages by their camp-fires, and if they alone approve, then am I satisfied and my labour shall be counted not in vain.

CHAPTER I

Introducing a Man, a Pack-horse and a Startling Piece of Information

THIS book is not going to begin with a sunset, a sunrise, or any of the well-recognized openings of a wilderness story, though I dare say, after a bit, when the time comes, and it is going slow otherwise, we will ring in a few of the natural phenomena, in which the sun and the moon do their duty on snow peak and shadowed valley, and so forth.

The very first thing I have on my mind is to impart a piece of information to the reader, that it seems to me must surprise him; it surprised me, just the other day when I looked it up, and I have been travelling in Western Canada off and on for more than fifteen years, and I never really realized how large it was until I started this story, and wanted to prepare, in a general way, the mind of the reader for the stage upon which I propose to disport with pack-horses, tender-feet and trappers, for the next few hundred pages.

I wrote an article for one of the magazines a few months ago, describing certain portions of British

Columbia; and, a few weeks after its publication, I received a letter from an unknown out in the west, which read something as follows:

"My dear Friend,—I seen your good story and I liked it fine. I think me and friend would better go to British Columbia. Could you write me briefly, given me what information you think would be useful about the country, describing in particular the rivers, lakes, flora, fauna, and agricultural features of the country, and anything else that you think would interest fellers who was going out there to settle."

In reply, I wrote my friend that British Columbia, if taken bodily and set down on the Atlantic seaboard, would have one of its tips resting in Maine and the other end would touch Key West, Florida, and the whole would reach as far west as Detroit, Michigan; and that its total area was just a shade larger than Germany and Japan combined, and that of all of these 310,391 square miles, there is only about one in twenty that has ever been seen by a white man; and that, with the exception of the territory immediately adjacent to the lines of the railroad, there was scarcely any population at all worth mentioning. I thought this information would be a good and sufficient excuse for not giving the detailed reply which he had suggested. So much then for the size of British Columbia, except to add

by way of parenthesis that Vancouver Island alone, which is so small in comparison with the mainland of British Columbia that it scarcely arrests one's attention on the map, is a trifle larger than England and Scotland combined.

Next door to British Columbia lies Alberta, which is about the size of the French Republic with the State of New York thrown in for good measure, with perhaps enough extra to make a handful or two of little Rhode Islands. These two bits of Canada are the particular wilderness whereof it is the purpose of this book to speak ; though, lest the wilderness hunting reader be discouraged at the idea of there being no more wild places left, it may be of interest to mention that there are still left in Canada three territories, each of which alone is nearly as large as British Columbia and Alberta combined, of which it is a safe guess even the names are not known to one man in a hundred. These wildernesses that still remain are the territories of Mackenzie, with its 532,000 square miles, Keewatin, with a round half-million, and Franklin with about the same area.

British Columbia is largely mountains, while Alberta is part mountains and part plains,—the main range of the Rockies and their foothills being, for several hundred miles, the western boundary of Alberta, while British Columbia is filled with the

western slope of the Rockies and the innumerable groups of mountains and ranges extending almost from the Coast to the Alberta boundary in the south, but breaking away and giving room for extensive plateaus and open places in the north. Where the Selkirks fade away, there is a great intermountain plateau extending from the Rockies to the Coast Range mountains. But of this country, more later; for it was in Alberta that I hit my first trail, and made my first camp beneath the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies. And now, hoping that I have made good on my startling information, promised at the beginning of the chapter, I shall proceed to introduce my man.

All this happened in 1897, when the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad was not the great tourist route that it is these days, and when the conductors on the sleeping cars used to point out to the excited tourist from across the water, spots on the sides of the mountains which, in those days, passed for mountain goat or sheep, or whatever else the traffic would bear. Anyway, without disparaging the conductors, it was a rough country, and a whole lot more full of game than it is to-day. The Canadian Pacific Railroad cut a pathway through the wilderness in 1885, and, barring the mere right-of-way, the country was not so very different in 1897 from what it was before the engineers came through.

As the country was accessible, and the writer was thirsting for the open, it was at Banff that he and a friend, both of whom were of that extremely green age that comes between preparatory school and college, disembarked from a trans-continental train one August morning. Each had a suitable armory which, according to the tasty pamphlets issued by the railroad, would answer for anything from mountain sparrows to grizzly bears. Our total amount of experience and common sense of the wilds was, to be brief, absolutely nil. We figured that in ten days we would kill all of the varieties of game that the mountains afforded and be well on our way East. In fact, the first night at the hotel we discussed what we should do with our various trophies. The next day, we met the man, and it is to introduce him that this chapter is written. His name was Stevens (Fred for short), and he worked for a man named Wilcox, who fitted out parties of tenderfeet who go out to play at hunting, in the Rockies. Wilcox took us around to a log cabin on the outskirts of town, where he said his man, Fred Stevens, was.

We went in. Sure enough, he was there, sitting on a bunk, about three feet deep in horse blankets, with legs crossed and eyes on ceiling, his entire attention going to a banjo, on which he was producing some excellent jig music. "Hello! Wilcox," said the employee to the employer, "what in the

h—— do you want? Come in, fellers, and sit down until I finish my bit and I'll get you a bite to eat." And with the sweet absorption of a babe, he strummed away for five minutes and then, uncurling his long legs, he came across and met us with the easy grace of an emperor.

Fred Stevens stood six feet and one inch in his stockinged feet. Twenty-nine years old then, he was, with the shoulders and muscles of an athlete, and soft blue eyes that drifted back and forth from the gentleness of a woman's to the glint and fire of a savage's. Big hands, big feet, and a big soul. He was then, and is to-day, a big man, as big a one as I have met in travels in many far corners of this world; big not only in bulk, but big in the qualities of heart and soul that go to make the best type; a man who was known then for hundreds of miles throughout the mountains, and who to-day (fifteen years later) is known for a thousand miles throughout this country. To be Fred Stevens' friend is all the introduction that a man needs, to get the best that the trail offers in Western Alberta and Eastern British Columbia, even to this day. But men are not described by outlining their figure and their features, but by telling of their deeds and doings, and so if the reader follows these pages, he will come to know this Fred Stevens—bear trapper, packer, and pioneer in British North America—even as well as does the

The patient little pioneers that help to open Empire.

writer, and that is some, for since that far-off day in Banff we have swum and rafted rivers together, packed on our backs, eaten of plenty and gone hungry together, over many thousand miles of trail and river.

Fred Stevens is the type of trapper and pioneer that is making the last stand against the invasion of the wilderness by the recurrent waves of civilization, that with each year are pushing further and further into the unnamed valleys of the West. Born in Michigan, and raised in the lumber camps, he started west as a mere boy. Cow-puncher and trapper in Montana, and hunter, prospector and logger throughout all of the north-western states, he drifted ever more to the remote regions where the wagon roads are replaced by the trail, and the trail ebbs away into the untrod and primeval forest. Montana and the United States Rockies became too civilized for him, and he switched over into the country of the Canadian Pacific, and for ten years roamed the wilds adjacent to that line ; but each year brought greater hordes of tourists and more oversea hunters, until the valleys that he had found " unpeopled and still " soon became little better than the Yellowstone Park. And so, year by year, he drifted further and further north until the final scene of his hunting and trapping expeditions became the realm soon to be within the focus of the world's attention, as the

new empire of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad.

Fred and his kind, and there are relatively but a handful left, are of the mould that made our great West possible. The breakers of the trail, along which the paths of the Empire and the surveys of the railroads have followed, are the real heroes of the west, and though by name they are almost unknown, yet it is to them as a class that the world owes its unpaid obligation of wildernesses conquered and field and forest turned from forbidding wilds to lands that blossom like the rose, and yield unto the markets of the world the mineral and agricultural wealth that for centuries has been stored within their acres.

Fred was the man of my first trip and "Little Billy" was the horse; and even as the man was a type of his kind, so was the horse a unique example of the second great factor in the opening of new empire, for without the pack-horse travel is all but impossible in the realm of the unknown. When one once leaves the steel, there is no longer hope of replenishing the larder with any of the staples until the return. All that one hopes to use for the weeks or months that one is to spend within the portals of the ranges must go on the wily little pack-animal, whose drooping head and plodding hoofs have followed on the heels of the pioneer, who, with axe in hand, has blazed the first trails from the prairie

to the Pacific. There are places where even the pack-horse cannot go, and canoes, rafts, and the back of the human pack-animal are the only means of transportation ; but taken all in all, the horse, the patient plodding little horse, has played a great part in empire building, a part which the writers in history have failed to credit to his balance in the final reckoning. When the millennium comes, when all that earn their dues are rewarded, then will justice erect a monument to the cayuse of the plains, the patient little beggar, who, uncomplainingly and sad eyed, has dragged his aching little body along the endless trails over plain and mountain these many decades gone. He has gone hungry, and he has suffered from the cold in winter ; he has been eaten alive by the bulldog flies, mosquitoes and gnats in the summer, and with the packer and trappers he has shared the thousand hardships and privations of the wilderness, with but small reward,—the privilege, after the hard day's work is done, of getting out and rustling a bite of brush or grass to fill his haggard little stomach, that strength may be engendered for the work of the morrow. But the true man of the mountains appreciates the horse, and though he curse and abuse him for hours on the trail, yet also will he sit up with him nights and rub his bruised and swollen legs with liniments, that he may go forward on the morrow.

Now, I have known and lived with some hundreds of pack-horses. I have spent limitless days with them on the trail, cursing and abusing them for their foibles, and I have spent equally limitless nights listening to them stumble about the camp, falling over the tents and upsetting equipage, yet I must say in tribute that I have never known such a one as Little Billy. He was what in the west is called a " blue horse," but what others call a roan. Small and stocky, with " china-blue " eyes, and soft little pink nose, that was ever in search of recognition of his merits, and snuffling for a bit of sugar or even a piece of bacon, he was the friend of all that he met. He was always the first horse in camp at night and would bite and kick the rest of his companions until he won the first place at the unpacking station, and after a few days on the trail, his right to the position was never questioned by the other horses. On the trail, he knew more than the packer himself. If there was a way, Little Billy would find it and get across with the least possible wetting. If it was a job for swimming, turn Billy in first and he would lead the rest of the pack-train to the best take-off and to the best getting-out place. If his pack bothered him or got loose, he never kicked up a mess like the other horses,—not he. He would stop dead still in the trail and stand for an hour, if need be, until some one came and fixed it up for him.

When the other horses were kicking and bucking, and playing the devil with their packs, Little Billy would always be found reflectively chewing brush or grass, with a look of blasé regret that his kind should be guilty of such folly. At night, when the mosquitoes and insects would be eating up the rest of the pack-train, one would hear a little rustle in the brush behind the camp-fire, and the soft plodding of little hoofed feet, and the next moment the little blue neck and the immobile china-blue eyes would be thrust over one's shoulder, to get the benefit of the smoke from the camp-fire. For hours he would stand thus, eyes half closed, and lower lip hanging contentedly in complacent enjoyment of the smudge. In the mire, he was at his best. Where other horses buck and kick, only getting in the deeper, this horse was at his ease. After the first plunge into the mess of muskeg or swamp, he would lie quiet as a mouse for perhaps a minute, his passionless blue eyes making a survey of the entire situation. Then, with all the delicacy conceivable, he would draw up one paw and very carefully advance it toward harder ground, testing the nature of the forward way with the utmost caution. Nine times out of ten, he would carefully wriggle out of his difficulties alone, but when it was beyond his means, he would roll over on his side so that his little blue body would give the greatest resistance to the surface, and with his neck

calmly outstretched, he would nibble at the near-by bunch-grass, calmly switching his tail, and ever and anon turning those china-blue orbs to see if help was coming. It was Little Billy that always carried the cameras, instruments and the fragile equipment. Once on his back, it was as safe as in a bank vault, and though every other horse was in trouble during the long day on the trail, yet one was always sure of a dry bed or unbroken instruments if Billy carried the pack.

Now, the critical reader may doubtless object to my beginning of this story. Here a whole chapter has gone, and only a man and a horse to show for it, but I cannot help it. They are the types, and the reader who would seek to know the wilderness without knowing both, and knowing them intimately, might as well abandon the study at the start. Leave out the trapper and the pack-horse, and there would be about as much left to the description of the trail as there would be ginger in the production of *Hamlet* with that distinguished Dane omitted.

And so endeth the first chapter.

Fred Stevens. Bear Trapper and Pioneer in British North America.

CHAPTER II

Which deals briefly with two Tender-feet on their first Trip in the Rockies

TWO days after we met Fred Stevens, the man, and Little Billy, the pack-horse, we started out to take an inventory of the Wilds, having added to our outfit one sad buckskin saddle-horse, which Fred was to ride, while the two of us were to walk. Our point of departure was from Laggan, a town on the Bow River, a few miles east of the point where the main line of the Canadian Pacific railroad strikes through the main range of the Rockies and drops through the Kicking Horse Pass, down to Field, the first divisional point on the British Columbia side.

We did not think we were tender-feet. I suppose no one ever does. We had six-shooters, shot-guns, rifles, hundreds and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and enough fishing tackle to have eliminated all of the " finny tribe " for ten square miles around. On the contrary, we considered ourselves to be hardy pioneers as we trudged off down the trail behind our long-legged guide, who straddled the buckskin,

and little Billy who ambled along easily in the rear. On this first trip, we carried a steamer trunk which made one side-pack, while the "grub pile" formed the other, and the tent and miscellaneous "tinkle tankle" filled in the top. We had discussed long the night before, whether or not we could get all of our strict necessities, to last for ten days, into a steamer trunk. We doubted it, but decided that as we were going on a hard trip, we would really do as the men in the wilds did and go light; and still we did not know that we were tender-feet.

That first day we travelled seven hours and camped in a swamp, and as the night was clear, we put up no tent. Up until midnight, we told ourselves that this was the real life; that we were of the West, and that the life of the trail was our life. From midnight till breakfast, we wished we had stayed at home. We had said that we would begin on mountain sheep and finish up on grizzlies and goats, if handy. So Fred got us up at daylight, and by seven we were marching along in the rear of the pack-horse, wondering just when we would begin to kill game, and if it were really worth the effort after all. About noon Billy walked too near the river bank, and the same collapsing, he fell in, steamer trunk and all; but, being a wise horse, he lay quiet with his nose expectantly held aloft, while the beautiful blue waters of the Bow flowed in, over and

through our outfit. We stood aghast, thinking that the end had come, and that the first day out we had encountered a tragedy of the mountains, but Fred only laughed, and with a lariat rope dropped a noose over Billy's head and, making it fast to his saddle-horse, yanked the pack-pony, steamer trunk and all up on to the bank. This put a damper on the day for us, especially when we found our changes of clothing streaked with mud and discoloured from the giddy pictures of hunters bringing in ducks that adorned the shell boxes.

Late that afternoon, we camped for another night. It rained before we could get our tent up. My friend stated openly that he did not like it, and while he sat shivering and cold before a wretched little smudge of a camp-fire, our genial host rolled over in his blankets and snored serenely. The next day he turned us out at dawn, just as we were getting our first real sleep of the trip. "Roll out, fellers," he called, as he slipped the guy ropes of our tent and let the wet folds descend in fluttering clouds about us. "Breakfast is ready, and if we're goin' to get any game this trip, we've got to be movin'."

It was still raining. We ate breakfast sadly. I, for one, racked my brain for some suitable excuse to turn round and go home. I know my friend entertained the same thought, for he did not even pretend that the wilds had any charms for him. We

camped again late the same afternoon, now well on into the mountains; but as it rained so hard, we saw no mountains; only low hanging clouds met the eye if we looked up, and swampy trail and burned timber, when a glance fell downward. My friend went out to catch some fish, but caught nothing but the "sniffles" and the seat of his trousers with his own hook. The former was obvious, and the latter he admitted with much dignity on being cross-examined. I took out my beautiful new shot-gun and ventured the comment that I would bring back a brace of partridges for supper. I saw none, but I did find in a clearing, a group of small red birds hopping joyfully about. At once I thought to myself, "I will make a collection of the birds of the Canadian Rockies, for surely Fred will know how to mount them." Already my mind's eye pictured my study in years to come, with cases of neatly arranged specimens of birds from all climes. These little birds should be the first to start the collection. I was pleased with the idea, and leaning against a tree, I took careful aim with my shot-gun (I had never fired it before) at the nearest bird and fired one barrel,—the second went off by itself. The birds flew away except one, and I found some of his feathers and a piece of his head in a near-by bush. My idea of the bird collection vanished at once and I returned to camp, where I found Fred mending a

pack-saddle and humming a ditty, with a refrain that ended up—

> "Once I was happy, but look at me now,
> Ten years in States prison for stealing a cow."

My friend sat disconsolately, looking into the fire. Oh, it was a gay scene, this rollicking wild camp of ours. "Well, fellers," said Fred, "to-morrow we'll turn out with the birds and go look for a sheep." At this we cheered up and told ourselves, after Fred had gone to sleep, that now we would come into our own.

We rose before daylight, and started off as soon as we could see, and for ten hours dragged ourselves over fallen timber and up the sides of the mountains until our feet were blistered and our bodies exhausted. We found no sheep, and while we sat on the top of an abandoned mountain peak, Fred sang songs and rolled big boulders down into the valley below. As soon as we were ready to move, we started back to camp, which we reached late that night, a sad and weary lot. My friend suggested that we go home, and, inasmuch as he was paying for half of the trip, I consented. Fred seemed much grieved. "Why, we haven't started yet," he remarked in surprise. "You fellers will like it fine as soon as you get accustomed to the grub." But we each felt that we ought to be starting for home. My friend

had urgent business in the East, and I had developed a strong inclination to go to China, and as there was a boat sailing in a week from Vancouver, I wanted to catch her. Finally Fred agreed, but suggested that he knew another and better way back to Laggan than the one by which we had come. It led over a pass which he hinted had never been crossed before, and then down the valley of the Pipestone, which flows into the Bow, just below Laggan.

The idea of a new pass, hitherto untrod by man, spurred us on. We would be the pioneers at last! So for two more days we stumbled along behind the horses. If there was a river to cross on a log, we fell in; if there was a soft spot in the trail, we found it and got in up to our waists.

There is a stream, the name of which I never knew, which flows into the Bow River, about twenty-five miles from Laggan, and we followed this up through the timber and on and on beyond the timber, where we camped for a shivery night. The next day we crawled up over a really very pretentious pass, with snow and icicles hanging over the trail. The pioneer idea had us both in its clutches, so, after breakfast, we both started off gaily in advance of the column of two horses, with the assurance from Fred that we would easily find him in the valley beyond, when he camped in the afternoon. I took one side of the pass and my friend the other, each

knowing that we would surely kill something big by the time we met Fred in the afternoon.

An hour after leaving camp, I found a great track in the trail which, according to what I had read in the books, was a bear track. I at once looked well to my rifle (I was sure that was the proper thing to do) and then advanced cautiously in pursuit. Every instant I expected to be engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the ferocious animal that I was trailing inch by inch to his lair among the rocks. I did this for about an hour, when I lost the trail entirely. (I afterwards learned from Fred, who also saw the tracks, that they were two weeks old, but I had had my thrill and no one could rob me of that anyway. It was my best experience of the trip, as it turned out.)

By the time I had abandoned my bear hunt, it was well on towards noon. Retracing my steps to the pass, I found where the two ponies had crossed a wet place in the gravel and set off in pursuit. The horse trail led down into a timbered valley and disappeared. In another hour, I was hopelessly lost. I tried to cross the stream on a log and fell in, nearly losing my rifle. For two hours, I wandered about in the timber, filled with regrets that I had been so rash as to separate myself from Fred. I sat for a long time, pondering the misery of my lonely death (which, of course, I deemed a foregone conclusion). A thousand pictures of exploring parties, following

my trail with bated breath and at last coming on my whitening bones, filled my mind. Even at this moment, I told myself, "Fred, alive at last to my peril of being lost among these wild mountains and roaring streams, is retracing his steps, studying with his practised eye the carpet upon which my feet have trod." He will feel it keenly, I thought, that a young boy in his charge should be lost, and perhaps perish (from pioneer and hardy character, I had become in my own mind but a helpless child), and he will ransack these woods to bring me succour. I stumbled on again as the day grew towards the lengthening shadows. I sat down again to my sad reflections, when all hope had died within my breast. Suddenly I heard a stir in the bushes. I seized my rifle. Again a rustle, and I cocked the trigger. I was sure that it was the grizzly of the morning—two or three, perhaps. I dare say my hair stood on end like a curry comb. If being scared produces that effect, it certainly did. And then a long face and a china-blue eye looked mildly from out the brush. It was Little Billy, the pack-horse, quietly rummaging through the woods in search of a mouthful of food. My heart leapt within me. If I follow him, I thought, he will eventually lead me to camp. My life is saved! I hastened through the brush after him and came on a clearing. What a sight!

Our tent was pitched, our camp-fire was burning brightly, and a pot of something was boiling merrily over the flames, but where was Fred? Was he searching the woods, crying again and again the names of the lost, or running frantically about from peak to peak, searching for those whom he would never see again? No, indeed, he was doing none of these things. On the contrary, he was sitting on a pile of blankets, a pipe hanging from his mouth, and strumming cheerfully on a banjo; and, as I listened I heard the gentle refrain of—

"Once I was happy, but look at me now,
Ten years in States prison for stealing a cow."

"Hello," he said, "what's been keeping you? I've finished my bite to eat two hours ago. Been lost?" For a moment I looked at him, and then asked where my friend was. "I dunno," he replied cheerfully; "he's lost, I guess. Want a bite to eat?" and still singing his refrain (I don't think there were any words beyond the chorus), he began cheerfully to stir the fire and cut up some bacon. I never told him of my troubles, but from that moment I knew that I was the greenest of the green, and that, with the possible exception of my friend, I was the tenderest tender-foot that ever got away from home and mother. And when, two hours later, we heard shots fired off a mile or two up the valley, and faint

hallooing, I smiled complacently to think that there was at least one other who did not know any more than I did. "Let him holler. It will do him good," commented Fred, with his pipe between his teeth. "If he does not stray in by and by, I'll go out and fetch him in." But I fired a few shots for his guidance which brought him into camp about dark, hungry, and reflecting in his face about the same emotions that I myself had felt earlier in the day.

The weather was clear, and that night we pitched no tent, but sat around the camp-fire till late, while Fred and I gave my friend, who admitted that he had been lost, sage advice as to what to do in such a case. But my friend and myself had not yet learned to love the wilds to excess, and so each, with his own particular reasons, urged that we push on toward the railroad. So we put in another long day on the trail, and the next night found us camped on a little peninsula formed by the junction of a rippling brook with the Pipestone.

The next morning, Fred admitted that we were within an easy three hours' march from the railroad and pointed out a hazy-looking mountain that just showed around a bend, as being on the other side of the Canadian Pacific Line. I was so eager to be off, that at last Fred suggested that I take the buck-skin saddle-horse and push in ahead, and that he and my friend would follow with the rest of the outfit.

The friend had had a sufficiency of independent travelling and readily accepted the lot of travelling with Fred and Billy, but I, having gotten out of my fright of two days before and with my mind stored full of Fred's advice, felt not the slightest hesitancy at making the balance of the journey by myself; for, as Fred had said, "the rest of the trail to Laggan is like Broadway, and if you just keep a-movin' for three hours, you cannot help hitting the railroad."

It was a lovely morning, and it was with a feeling of independence and freedom that I forded the Pipestone and struck off down the well-worn trail toward civilization. For an hour I rode, and sang aloud in chorus with the birds that fluttered among the trees. Then the trail began to get on harder ground, and, somehow, its resemblance to Broadway did not seem to be so remarkable. By and by it forked. This was a contingency that I had not anticipated. It was then I looked for the mountain that was to be my guide, but from my different point of view, after an hour's travel, I could not tell which one it was, and, anyway, the trees were so thick, I could scarcely see the mountain line at all.

I took the trail to the right. It grew stronger and deeper, and for another hour I rode cheerfully along, my moment of depression at the forking of the ways being forgotten in the glorious morning air, and the feeling of being alone and independent in the

wilderness. Suddenly, the green timber gave way to an opening filled with burned and charred trunks of trees, which had fallen every which-way, and I had to get off my horse to lead him around stumps and over the fallen timber. The trail was suddenly swallowed up, when I emerged from the débris, in fire-weed and brush. However, as I told myself, "I would soon pick it up when I got into the live timber again," for Fred had said that wherever a trail goes, either into a swamp or a forest, it is pretty apt to come out somewhere on the other side. I was half an hour trying to cross the "burn," dragging my patient buckskin after me, and finally came out into the green timber again, but I saw no sign of my trail. I tied up my steed to a tree, and for half an hour more hunted for some sign of a path. At last, I found a very faint one. I spent another fifteen minutes looking for my horse, and after I had found him, about the same length of time in re-finding my path. It was now about noon, and I told myself that, but for getting into the burned timber, I would already be in Laggan, eating lunch at the section house by the depot, for the *Chalet Hotel* is three miles from the railroad.

To make up time, I hurried my horse along the newly discovered trail, expecting each minute that it would get stronger, or be joined by some other trail going in the same direction, but I was doomed to

disappointment. After an hour, I lost it entirely and, when I tried to go back to the last sign of it, I got so turned about that I became utterly confused. The trees were so thick that I could not see the mountains at all. For an hour, I travelled in what I thought was the right direction, finally coming out on a little clearing. I tied my horse and sat down on a log to think it over. I was hungry. Fred had suggested that I should take some lunch, but in view of getting into town in three hours, I had scoffed at the idea. I now cursed myself for a fool. I had learned one more lesson, to wit : that the wise man never leaves camp in the mountains without a lunch. From the clearing, I could see the mountains in every direction. They looked so utterly different from the way they had in the morning, that if my life had depended on it, I could not tell whether a big snow cap, back in the direction from which I had come, or another similar-looking one off to the opposite point of the compass, was the landmark Fred had recommended.

It was now about 2 p.m., and I had been travelling five hours. It was obvious to me that I was again in a plight similar to my previous experience, only I felt different this time, for I remembered that Fred had quoted to us the Indian axiom, " Sometimes camp lost, but Indian never lost." A man with a gun can live for weeks on what he can shoot, and the berries he can eat, so I started on again in the way I

had been going in the first place, trusting that I was aimed in the right direction. Every half-hour, or so, we would come into a clearing, and my heart would leap with the expectancy that I would now see the railroad grade, but I was always disappointed. After about seven hours of weary travel, I came out into a burned-over tract, beyond which was a little barren ridge. Over that ridge, I felt sure I would find the railroad grade. I was now on foot, dragging my horse by the bridle. We climbed the slope on to the ridge, and I was absolutely convinced that I was at my destination at last. On reaching the summit, I looked down ; and after taking one long look, I sat down on a log. What I saw was a small blue lake ; but surely, if there had been a lake near Laggan, I would have heard about it. For a long time I debated what should be done. I decided to go around the lake and push on through the timber, and climb a little knoll that I could see about a mile beyond. For an hour, I dragged my pony over fallen logs, and at last, reaching my point, I looked down into the gulley. I dragged my horse down into this and again sat down to think. At this moment I saw a partridge in a tree. I got out my rifle, and with a silent prayer that my aim might be true, I fired. The bullet took off his head and he fell at my feet.

I have dragged out this first trip at great length,

just to get at this bird incident. Up to that time, I had been worried and not a little frightened. I had come to feel that if I ever got out, I would never put my foot into the wilds again ; but, with the fall of that bird, a great reawakening came over me, and with it a love for the wilderness that no dangers, frights or hardships, which I have since incurred, has ever shaken in the smallest degree ; for with this bird, I felt that I had established my right to wring from nature my living. My fears vanished, I tied my horse to a tree and took off his saddle, saying to myself, " Fred is lost, camp is lost, Laggan is lost, but I am not. I shall camp right here, cook my bird, and to-morrow I will go back to the other mountain. If I have killed one bird, I can kill more ; and, if there are no more birds, I can eat my horse. It is six weeks before snow, and if I cannot find a way out in that time, I deserve to perish."

I actually whistled as I knelt down to kindle my first fire, alone in the wilderness.

My whole being seemed atune with Nature and I rejoiced, for I felt that I had found myself. I struck a match, and even as it crackled, I stopped to listen. In the distance I heard a low rumbling noise which grew louder and louder. I never lighted the fire, but dropping the match, scrambled up out of the gulley and found myself within ten yards of the right-of-way, and was just in time to see a great double-headed

freight train come pounding down the track. I looked down the track, and not half a mile further on I saw the great red water-tank at Laggan. I laughed aloud, and from that day to this I have blessed the partridge; for without it, I should never have been awakened to the idea of man's superiority to the wilds, and to that glorious feeling of freedom and independence which the necessity of finding one's salvation brings. But for him, I should have stumbled on to the railroad in another five minutes and would have left the mountains, probably never to return again. This was exactly what happened to my friend, who came in with Fred later in the day, for they too had lost the "trail as clear as Broadway."

That same night we started East together, but in my heart burned the lust for the mountains that has never yet been quenched.

CHAPTER III

Introduces two Brand-new Tender-feet and another Trapper, and Recounts their Combined Efforts to Pierce the Rockies

IF the Spanish-American War had lasted longer, there probably would not have been any third chapter to this book. If there had been, it would have been under a different heading, for at least two of the members of expedition number two into the Canadian Rockies had their plans set for that event ; but, when summer came, bringing with it the end of the first year in an Eastern college, the war in Cuba was all over but the cheering.

Therefore it was that one, Sidney B., who had listened with a willing ear to the talk of big game and wild adventure to be had in the West, gave me his heart and hand for a campaign into the haunts of the grizzlies. He also had a friend whom he dearly loved, and it was decided that we three together would devote six weeks to exploration. The result was that toward the end of July, 1898, we all disembarked from a train at a station by the name of Lacombe, which is 112 miles north of Calgary, on the line to Edmonton, for here it was that we were to

meet Fred Stevens, who this year owned an outfit of fourteen horses, with the additional luxury of a cook. Our campaign this time, I told myself, was to be a first-class affair, and one that should push into the heart of the Rockies and come back loaded with the spoils of the chase.

I considered my comrades as very green, and no doubt Lacombe considered us all on a par, for it was here that groups stood and winked, and laughed at us, while we three dressed ourselves in suitable attire (all brand-new), which was very unfortunate for men who were going on such a hazardous undertaking. We imagined, at the time, that we were the object of admiration to these town-folk, who had never pushed forward into the brush, and it was not for several years afterwards, in the light of more experience myself, that I came to realize that we must have been objects of great merriment as we mounted our horses and, clad in shiny new leather "chaps," dashed up and down the streets of the town.

In that day, there were not over fifty houses in the place, and even Edmonton, the metropolis of the whole region, could not boast of more than 2,000 inhabitants, while to-day, scarcely fourteen years later, it claims 40,000 people.

Two "mixed freight and passenger trains" made the tedious fourteen to eighteen hour journey from

Calgary to Edmonton three times a week in summer and once a week in winter, while to-day there are some thirty to forty trains in and out of the Alberta capital each twenty-four hours. One could have purchased property on Jasper Avenue, in Edmonton, that year for $300 a lot, with a frontage of forty feet, which, within the current year, has changed hands for $2,500 a front foot. Even in Lacombe, I was offered the purchase of a small property for $600, which two years ago the owner refused $29,000 for, while farming land that then was going for a few dollars an acre, is now being cut up into town lots at heaven only knows how many hundred dollars a lot. If there ever was a country that was turned from a wilderness into a garden of plenty, it is surely this same strip of Alberta, with its broad acres sown thick with ranches and the houses of well-to-do farmers, most of whom have already made their clean-up of a small fortune. But in that day, we had our youthful minds set on big game, and not the amassing of wealth, for such is youth in its first year at college.

We camped the first night a little way from town, and while we were at breakfast, Fred exclaimed in a low voice, "Look, boys, there's a deer, get your guns." Sid, who was of an excitable nature, gave one wild whoop of delight and charged across tin plates and coffee-pot that stood between himself

and his rifle, and T. F. (tender-foot) number three and myself were close behind. The deer did not wait, but started for a near-by bit of timber, with the springing gait peculiar to its kind, when Sid opened up, with the rest of us close behind. The five shots in his magazine went out like bullets from a machine gun, and then, dropping his gun, he started off in pursuit, yelling, "I hit him. I hit him." Sid had been a sprinter at college, and he disappeared into the brush in about two seconds. We saw no more of him until nightfall, so the rest of us remained in camp during the entire day. After pursuing the deer for about five minutes, he lost entire track of it, but he was not in the least discouraged. It was not in his disposition, for he kept on for an hour or two, expecting every minute to come upon the dead body. No power on earth could have convinced him that he had not wounded the animal. When he finally abandoned the search, he found that he had no idea of the way he came. He wandered around all day in the brush until he finally met a woodchopper, who was pursuing his humble vocation, and who, for a small reward, led him back to camp. This was the nearest we came to any game on the trip.

We travelled for a week, steadily approaching the line of Rockies, which day by day seemed to retreat before us, but at last on the eighth day we pulled our pack-train into the valley of the great Sas-

katchewan River, at a point just opposite the site of one of the most historic of Hudson Bay trading posts, long since abandoned. It was at this point that Fred had expected to cross the river and get on to a well-beaten Indian trail that led directly into the mountains through the great gap in their ragged walls, out of which flows the great Canadian river, which ultimately pours its cloudy waters into Lake Winnipeg and thence into Hudson Bay. Across the river, we could see the ruins of an old chimney and a few fragments of crumbling walls—all that was left of the Rocky Mountain House, that has had a place on every map of the Dominion of Canada printed these many years. Not since the first day that we had left Lacombe, had we seen a single human habitation, and it seemed strange, indeed, to see this old crumbling relic of perhaps a century or more ago, ninety miles from the settlement. As a matter of fact, the Rocky Mountain House was a centre for Indians and trappers to meet and trade their wares for the supplies of the Hudson Bay Company, long before a railroad or settlement in Alberta was ever dreamed of.

As soon as we had made our camp, and had had our bite to eat around the pack cover, which serves as a tablecloth in the mountains, Fred went down to the accustomed ford, and after a few gloomy minutes of observation of the river, that was sliding

past with sullen sloppings against its banks, he remarked that it would be impossible to cross here, as the water was higher by feet than he had ever seen it. Sid, whom nothing ever distressed for more than a minute, was for swimming it at once, but Fred considered the risk too great to attempt. That night, he and Frank Hippach, who was trapper number two, sat about the camp-fire and discussed the prospects of our further progress. It was decided that we would keep on the south side of the river, cutting our trail as we went. This seemed like a bold adventure to us three, and we all jumped eagerly at the prospect, for surely it was far more romantic to go the untrodden way than to drag along in some one's old tracks.

The next ten days I shall omit in detail. Suffice it to say, it was not more than sixty miles to the mountain gap, if that far, but we were all of that ten days getting there. Sid, who was a bull for strength, and whom nothing deterred, was for pushing on every hour of daylight. I felt as he did, but friend number three felt neither, and with the first day of cutting trail, his spirits began to wilt. He never told me his troubles, but he poured them out by the hour to Sid, and it was plain to see that he had had his fill of the wilds. It was hard and discouraging work and no mistake. Up at daylight and packed, and on the " hike " by eight, we would keep steadily

at it for seven hours and eight hours at a stretch. Now it would be a windfall, and Fred would be half an hour in chopping a way for the horses. Next, we would be in muskeg and mire, with horses down and packs turning every minute. Then it would rain in torrents, and we would all be soaked to the skin. The game, according to Fred, was all on the other side of the river and there were none of us to dispute his statement.

After several days out, our menu speedily lapsed to bacon and bannock (bread made with baking powder before the camp-fire), with a little jam thrown in once a day. Fred, who had set his heart on getting us game and giving us a good time, worked like a beaver, and night after night, after his hard day's work on the trail, he would take his rifle and be gone for three or four hours in the brush, searching out the way for the morrow and scanning the country for game. Then, by the camp-fire, later, he would sit for hours, in spite of his disappointment and weariness, and strain himself to the utmost to amuse us with stories of his adventures and of the trail.

Some days, we would not achieve more than a few miles, after hours of grim work, but no matter how hard it rained or how bad the going was, Fred was always the same with his cheery "Never mind, fellers, we'll get to some place soon, and then won't we raise h—— with the mountain sheep? Well, I

guess." Hippach, who was helping pack and doing the cooking, was close behind in cheeriness, and two better, finer fellows it has never been my lot to travel with in the mountains, or any other country. But friend number three grew sadder each day. The funniest story never elicited a smile from him, and prophecies for better going ahead, only gained from him a sour, " That's what you said yesterday." He had Sid's most confidential ear, and I could see, day by day, that he was persuading his optimistic friend that we had better turn back. He never approached me, for I was with Fred heart and soul, and eager to get into the game country, rain or shine, hard going or easy.

At last we got to the gap, where the river comes pouring out of a great wedge in the mountains, like a veritable mill-race. We camped one night under the very shadows of the mountains, and within half a mile, or so, of the canyon, out of which the great milky river, swollen from the mountain snows, was pouring its frothy volume at eight or ten miles an hour. Friend number three looked on disconsolately, for he had prophesied that we would never get there, and had been praying daily that we might turn back ; but Sid was now in high feather, and we spent the finest night of the trip on the shores of the great deep-flowing river, whose waves lapped the very edge of our camping place, almost as the surf upon the beach.

The next day was rainy, but in the afternoon we packed up and started for the passage through the gap, where the trail runs like a serpent along the river and only a few feet above its creamy surface. After a short "drive," as the day's way is called on the trail, we reached the brink of the canyon, and wound down in a zigzag to the point where the path ran at the very water's edge. The fourteen horses were strung out on the steep descent, when a terrific thunderstorm broke out upon us. The darkness was as of night, and we could barely see to go; the rain came down in torrents, and every moment the heavy artillery of the mountains boomed and thundered, the echoes rolling back and forth through the ranges of the mountains, like the report of a pistol in a cave. Vivid flashes of zigzag lightning, lurid and threatening, flashed across the valley, while the horses reared and plunged on the narrow trail, and loosened rocks came rolling down from those in the rear, hurtling past those of us in the lead.

Just at this point, Fred, behind whom I rode, turned out on to the narrow ledge of the trail that led into the gap. On foot now, and with back to the rock, to keep his place on the narrow way, he advanced slowly. Suddenly the trail ended abruptly. The river had carried it away. In the meantime, the horses behind were

crowding down on us, biting and kicking each other, the while Sid, who loved the battle of the elements, yelled like a Comanche Indian. Friend number three said nothing, but the occasional glimpses of his face, revealed in the glare of the lightning, indicated that this was not his sort of game.

With the greatest difficulty, we turned the horses

Pack-horses in the Muskeg.

on the narrow ledge, one of them actually splashing in, but climbing out again below where the trail was wider. The horses above were turned back, and an hour later we were once more at our starting place of the morning. As soon as we were in camp, friend number three and Sid disappeared into the woods, and when they returned, for supper, the former looked more cheerful than since the day we started, and the latter more sober. I read the ultimatum in their faces at the first glance, for we were sharing alike in the financing of the trip, and they were two to one. Sid had been won over and had yielded to his friend's persistent desire to turn back. Fred and I were for another try over a pass which he knew of, but it was no use. We had reached the high-water mark of our trip, and before we turned in for the night, it was decided that we should spend a couple of days in the camp where we were and then turn around and "hit for home." Fred made a wry face at the decision and remarked quietly to me, "Well, boy, I guess our pipe is out. Let's turn in."

CHAPTER IV

In which our Expedition returns Ingloriously

ONCE the return had been determined upon, friend number three could not be restrained, and his eagerness to get back to the Mountain House, where we had left a cache of food supplies, was such that, the morning after our decision to abandon further progress, we held a council of war to determine ways and means whereby the long and dismal march back might be shortened. The outcome of the conference was that we would build a raft on which all the superfluous baggage should be packed, and that the party should split, a portion going back over the trail, the balance taking the raft and river route.

It was at once obvious that one of us must go on the raft with one of the men, while the other returned with the pack-train. Friend number three, who had kicked so persistently on the travel by pack-train, was, of course, to go on the raft, and Hippach was to accompany him. Fred said that he would like one of us to accompany him with the outfit, and that the other better go on the raft. Now, Sidney B. was never one to quit, and he

promptly volunteered for what seemed the tedious job of going over the trail, but I, as organizer of the expedition, was only too eager that he should have a little fun out of it, and insisted that he should make the third party for the eighty miles by river which would bring them back to our cache, where we would meet them a few days later with the pack-train.

A Halt to hunt Trail.

Sid, who had a condition in French to make up before he could get back into the second year of college, and who had brought his books with him (but had not yet opened their covers), was finally persuaded on the ground that it would be a good chance for him to make up his back-work, while they drifted down the broad waters of the Saskatchewan.

So we all set to at the construction of a monster

raft. Eight dead fir trees were sought out in the woods along the bank (for green timber has not the buoyancy of the dry), and after being felled, were cut off thirty feet from their butts. Both ends were trimmed off to fine edges with the axes, so that if they should strike a rock, they would slide over. The larger ends were for the stern and the thin ends for the bow, if such terms may be applied to such a clumsy construction as a raft. Cross-pieces were then notched and laid on the ground, the notches being scooped out wherein each log should rest. Then the trees that had been trimmed, cut and dragged into place on the cross-pieces, were tightly bound with pack ropes at their over-lapping ends to others equally notched and placed above them. The latter are put on wet and, when dried in the sun, shrink perceptibly, thus drawing the embracing upper and lower cross-pieces together like a vice on the timbers, which are held tight and true in place by the notches which prevent their turning over. In the centre, a third upper and lower cross-piece was placed, to give the whole more solidity, for there are some rough waters which we were to encounter between our camp and the Mountain House; and, as Fred remarked, "When I trust my neck to a raft, I sure want to know that she's goin' to hold together, for I never was much of a hand to swim in these mountain brooks."

When the raft was completed, we cut long stout poles and, using them as levers, wedged her off into the river. Strong posts were let in fore and aft, and sweeps cut with axes out of single trees were fitted into these to help steer the craft. Two strong men on such a raft can take it through water that would make many a canoe-man turn dizzy, for with these sweeps and the leverage given by the fore and aft posts, a raft can be turned about in midstream with half a dozen powerful heaves. The whole was heavily carpeted with spruce boughs, the baggage roped in a heap toward the stern, and the pile well covered over with pack-covers to keep it dry from rain or spray from rough water. When she was all loaded, she still rode high in the water, and so we decided to put everything on the raft except what one pack-animal could carry, thus saving us the trouble of packing up extra horses with dunnage each day we " hit the trail."

For two whole days we worked on the raft, which, when completed, seemed a miracle to me, as the only tools Fred had had to help him in his task were two axes and a big jack-knife. After breakfast on the third day, Hippach and the two boys boarded their craft, the last bits of baggage were lashed on, and Fred and I pushed them out into the stream. For a few yards, they lagged near shore, and when the current caught them, with Sid at the rear sweep and

Hippach at the front, they were swept around the bend on the frothing surface of the river. For several minutes after they had disappeared, Fred stood looking down the river and listening to the diminishing sound of Sid's deep voice, as he howled his enthusiasm at the new sensation. Then Fred remarked, " Well, I hope we've done right in turnin' them loose, but I dunno."

We then turned and packed up what was left, which was not much. To enable us to make more rapid progress, we had sent away even the tent (we only had one, and figured they would need it more than we) and had taken only sufficient provisions to last us five days, all of which, together with our beds, easily went on one horse. Of course, we picked the best, little china-blue-eyed Billy, who, though the smallest of all our horses, was still able to carry the heaviest load and come out with it at the end of the day with nothing broken, and not even a pack-cover ripped.

Our trip back was not sensational, but it was a hard one. Fred led the way, and I rode behind with ten horses strung in between. The only trail to return by was the one we had cut as we came up, and we deviated from that frequently to save time when it was possible to make such a cut-off. Up at daylight, and after a bite to eat again on the trail, we would travel till past noon,—stop, rest an hour

or two, and then away again until twilight, when we would throw off our packs, unsaddle the horses, and have a bit of bacon, bread and a sup of coffee, after which we would curl up in our beds under a spruce tree until daylight. I was not used to the life, and by nightfall would be so tired that I would slide into my bed and sleep without a motion until daylight, even though the rain came down in torrents, which it did one or two nights.

The third day we had an accident which depressed Fred very much. We had a wild-eyed cayuse in the bunch, who was for ever running out into the brush and leading the others after him, thus creating endless delays and vexation in getting them back. So, on that morning, the restless horse, whom we called Cyclone, on account of his abrupt disposition, was tailed to our peaceable, path-finding little blue-eyed Billy (that is, his halter rope was braided into Billy's lovely, long grey tail, which was bent back and a half-hitch taken around it, thus binding him tighter than a brother to his equine twin). All went well until late in the day, and as I lopped in my saddle, first on one side and then the other, to ease my tired legs, that were stiff and sore from the ten and twelve-hour days in the saddle, I blessed Fred's forethought in effecting this scheme of piloting his wayward horse.

We were winding along a rather narrow trail, through some second growth timber, when little Billy,

who was moving along half asleep, unwarily put his foot into a hornets' nest. He at once woke up and stepped more briskly, receiving a few stings in his hindquarters, but behind his hoofs there emerged a thin wisp of hornets, each humming with eagerness to test his business end, and just as they arose, along came old Cyclone. They landed on him in dozens. He at once tried to rear, and in so doing pulled little Billy back over the nest, whereupon a swarm of the vicious buzzers landed on his round blue back and commenced operations. Billy at once put on " full speed ahead," while Cyclone rang " full speed astern."

It was obvious to me at a glance that there was a difference of opinion between them, as to the policy that was best adapted to this emergency, and that if the tail held, they would fight it out until the last hornet had done its duty. With fascination, I watched them go at their tug-o'-war—Cyclone, with his ears back and his four feet pulling one way, with Billy, head down and four little blue legs hauling in the opposite direction for all that was in his fuzzy little hide. For a fraction of a minute that tail stood as taut as a cable, and I fancied I could even hear the wind singing through it as through a harp. Then it gave way, and Cyclone dashed off through the timber neighing triumphantly, with a long wisp of grey tail swinging at the end of his

halter rope, while Billy lunged forward on his knees, a little black stump, stripped of hair, remaining to tell the dismal tale (no pun intended). I called Fred and he came back, but he was so depressed that he elected to camp right where we were for the night. Cyclone was caught, and the fragment of grey hair released from the halter rope, and for the next week it travelled in the grub-bag with our bacon and flour.

That night, as we sat by the camp-fire, I noticed Fred looking long and steadily into the flames. "What is it, Fred?" I asked. He did not reply for a moment and then said sadly, "Well, I was thinkin' of little Billy's tail. Do you know, I wouldn't have had that happen—well, for as much as—well, say $1.75." I have often wondered just why $1.75, but I never knew, for we were too tired to talk and soon rolled into our beds for the night.

The next day we travelled eleven hours and had to camp that night in a pouring rain out in the brush without fresh water, for the storm cloud so darkened the way that we could not see to go. No water means no supper, for bacon or dry bread without water is only an aggravation. For the same reason, we went breakfastless, and in fact had nothing to eat until that afternoon. We figured we were near the Mountain House, and that we would get there by early afternoon, for we were near the point where the

river swings in toward the trail once more, after its detour to the other side of the valley. As we rode out on to a bit of beach, I saw Fred stop his horse and slide quickly out of the saddle. I cantered up to where he stood. "What's wrong?" I asked, as I saw his face whiten beneath his tan. For reply, he pointed to the beach, where an eddy of the river had left almost dead water. I looked, and there, lying along the mud, I saw five of the logs that had gone to make our raft. I looked at Fred and he pointed to the beach. What I saw was the foot-marks of one pair of boots, leading up into the timber.

"Listen," he said, and, above the soft murmuring of the wind in the tree-tops, I heard the dull roar of waters. "It is the rapids," he said below his breath, "they're just up around the bend, and I guess our raft has gone to pieces and our pals are drowned."

We looked at each other in horror for a second. I felt as though the sun had gone out and a mountain had fallen on my soul, for it was I who had inveigled my two friends into the wilds. "Let's follow the footprints," I suggested, "and see who got away;" and, leaving our horses and the pack-train, we started at a run into the woods—and almost fell over our whole party encamped in the brush. They could not realize why we were so glad to see them, especially friend number three. The situation and the one track coming up the

beach were readily explained. They had all landed two days before, taken their raft apart, and had made a camp back in the woods. It had rained the night before and all marks had been obliterated. The only one to go down to the river had been Hippach, and he had climbed down a cut bank and come back up the beach.

Well, we drove in the horses, and without even waiting for a bite to eat, we packed up and late that afternoon pulled in and camped on a little flat opposite the Mountain House, where we had cached our luxuries. While we were camping, Sid shot a goose through the wing and started off down the river at his topmost speed, which was not to be despised. We had not had a bite of fresh meat for weeks and to see this fat and luscious viand drifting away from us was too much for Sid, who ripped off his clothes and in spite of the fierce current and ice water, swam out and caught the bird and managed to land it a quarter of a mile down the river bank, which resulted in our having grouse-dumpling for supper and all of the delicacies that we had stowed away in our cache.

That night, as we sat around the camp-fire, we heard in detail the story of our raft, which, indeed, had been all but a tragedy. From the first hour that they were afloat, it became evident that their sweeps were not long enough to be effective in

guiding the craft quickly. The weather was getting colder and the river was falling, which meant that the current was in the centre, and that they could not easily get out of it. The Saskatchewan turned out to be filled with white water and rapids, and every time the raft had encountered these bad places, Sid and Hippach had been obliged to work like demons to keep her head ended into the current, for to run into a rock broadside meant capsizing and instant destruction. Half of the time the water in the rapids was running waist deep over the raft, and after the first hour, they were all wet to the skin and exhausted from their efforts. Attempts to land had proven ineffective, for each time as they would be almost near enough to shore to get off and make a rope fast, a counter-current would snatch them and sweep the raft out again into the stream and the renewal of the fight would again commence ; in a single day they had drifted down to the point where we had found them (nearly 80 miles), so swift was the river. They had passed over the rapids just above, barely escaping death and disaster, but so well made was the ship of the river that she held together in spite of her innumerable collisions with rocks. Below the rapids they saw the bend in the river with its long beach and eddy of still water.

Night was coming on, and it was now or never with them to get ashore, for both were exhausted,

and night on a raft in an unknown river, is not a project to enliven the imagination. With almost superhuman strength they had swung the raft out of the current and into the eddy, but just as they thought themselves safe, a counter-current had again caught them and they found themselves drifting back into the main stream of the swift-racing Saskatchewan. Without a second's hesitation, Sid ran to the front of the raft and seized the pack-rope which had been coiled up for mooring, and with all his clothes on he plunged into the ice-cold water and swam for shore. Hippach and friend number three worked at the sweeps till their veins stood out in cords, to hold back the raft, until the swimmer could get to shore and make fast to a tree, when their troubles were ended. But neither Fred nor I had shared the exhilaration of their escape, and we could not laugh with them over it, for we had had a pretty bad scare that morning on the beach.

This trip is almost over. For five days we travelled hard and fast, and in the afternoon of the sixth day, wet and bedraggled, we pulled into Lacombe, where we caught the first train for the East—Sid, aflame with a love for the wilds, which has since taken him into a thousand wild corners of Mexico and the south-west, where his name to-day is known far and wide for his daring and intrepidity, and as that of the prince of good fellows. Friend

number three returned to the East, and the next year an office swallowed him up, and what has become of him since, I do not know.

Note.—I neglected to state that Sid did not make up his condition in French on the way down the river.

CHAPTER V

With the Yellowhead Pass as an Objective Point, I lure two more Tender-feet out into the Rocky Mountains

THREE years, with their recurring summers, slid away, but though I was unable to get back to the snow-caps and murmuring forests of Western Canada, my mind was busy formulating a programme for the first free summer that might come my way. Heretofore, my trips had been but outings of a school-boy, eager to get into a wild rough country and enjoy new adventures, and, if possible, do a little big-game hunting. But three years had brought some little maturity and the fascination that lured me now was no longer the mere eagerness for a change and outdoor life that had been the potent factors which had led me westward in the earlier years.

Much reading of the West and some little travel over the newer parts of our own United States had awakened in my imagination the vision of a new and greater Canada, an Empire which still lay untrammelled and slumbering the sleep that centuries of progress and advancing civilization had not yet

touched. While at college, I had read a great deal about the Canadian West, and had corresponded with guides and packers in Alberta and British Columbia, whose names I could pick up, to see what information I could gather of the remoter realms that lay above and beyond the line which the C.P.R.

A bit of the Rockies Range near Banff.

had driven through the southern wilderness. The more I tried to learn of the country, the more eager I became in my quest, and the more did I discover that the particular country that interested me was apparently one of the least known. The letters that I received from the trappers were filled with ambiguities as to trails and rivers. The latest

atlases were filled with dotted lines where the sources of the large rivers should have been, while great tracts as large as many of our big states were dismissed by the single phrase " Unexplored country, but supposed to be good grazing land," or " Details unknown, but thought to be a great game and timber

Camp Desolation. Just over the Bow Summit.

country." At last I came into possession of a little pamphlet, issued by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, on British Columbia. In the main it was given over to the resources along the line of their own system, but in the back thereof was a map of British Columbia, showing rough outlines of the rivers, mountain ranges, and the general lay of the land. After hav-

ing been over their main line a number of times, with its dreadful grades and long detours, in developing distance to get any grade at all, I had become firmly

The cream of the day—the camp-fire at night.

convinced that it would be but the question of a decade or two when there would be a second trans-continental railroad in Canada, and the great open blocks of space on the British Columbia maps, around

where Fort George was located, led me to believe that such a line would run in that vicinity.

On the little map that I had were marked three northerly passes—namely, the Peace, the Pine and the Yellowhead. I knew, from having been in Alberta, that Edmonton was a coming town, and, as that whole section was opening with astonishing rapidity, I felt that any new line through the mountains would surely pass that way. I had no knowledge of any of the passes, but the map showing the Yellowhead Pass, with the great Fraser River rising on its crest and making the great loop north and back again to the main line of the railroad, where it comes in at Ashcroft, a few hours' ride from Vancouver, lured my imagination so perceptibly that I conceived the idea that it would be a great trip to go in on the east side of the mountains, get through the pass, and then go down the Fraser to civilization.

Knowledge of mountain streams, canoeing and rafting, I had none, and therefore I cheerfully made my plans and wrote Fred Stevens, asking him to fit out for a trip, and to make suggestions as to how we should get in. From the first, he was very dubious as to the whole enterprise. That it was a rough and extremely wild country between civilization and the pass, that the Fraser was out of his beat, and that it was questionable and even doubtful whether we could get down it if we got there, was his

first reply. However, he complied with my request, and it was decided that we should leave Laggan, the point of departure on my first trip into the moun-

Pink, the Mountain Philosopher.

tains, and follow up the main range of the Rockies until we reached the pass. If we got there intact, we planned on going through and returning to the rail-

road somehow or other on the British Columbia side. Even Fred knew little or nothing of the trails beyond a certain point, and so the plan, other than that we were going to have a look at the pass, was a very vague and indefinite one.

My experience on the previous trips had taught me to bring a small outfit and a light one. This time I had been careful, too, in the comrades I had picked, as well as in the personnel of the outfit. Fred came with fifteen horses and two men, while I arrived with two friends ; one a fine, mild mannered and scholarly chap, just out of college, whose hobby was philosophy and psychology and whom, in the brief pages I shall devote to this expedition, I shall call Pink, which was his college nickname. My other friend was two years younger and passed through college under the sobriquet of " Ricky." For Hippach, who had been on the trip I had made with Sid and friend number three, three years before, I had formed a great attachment, on account of his unfailing cheerfulness, loyalty and devotion. Much of his life had been spent as a prospector, and I induced him to leave California, where he had moved two years before, and join my expedition into the wilds. He was to be assistant packer and to prospect the country as we travelled through it. The last member of the party was John Scales, an Englishman (a photographer by profession) who was to

do the cooking. We had six saddle-horses, one for each of us, and nine pack-horses, and were provisioned for a three months' trip. Very little of luxuries were in our "grub-pile," but flour, bacon, beans, oatmeal, tea, coffee, and the other things that make steam for the human engine in the wilds, were our staples. I had learned that what one needs in the mountains is vital energy and that the only food really necessary is that which produces the same. Tinned stuff takes up great space in the packs, is inconvenient to carry and weighs two or three times its value as nourishment, so this trip was really the first I made in which the ear-marks of the tenderfoot did not stick out of every pack that went on a horse.

We started from Laggan in July, 1901, and followed up the valley of the Bow River. The trail was the same as I had travelled four years before, but it had been improved and cut out a good deal since then, and we travelled steadily, making fairly good time. The second day out, we were held up by a severe snowstorm, which brought us to an early camp. I have made a lot of rainy and snowy camps since, but somehow that one still remains in my memory as about the worst. The mountains were wrapped in clouds. Beside us flowed the Bow River, a dark blue, stealthy-moving expanse of water, as dimly seen through the snow whirl. The storm had

started with a cold rain, turning to snow; and by the time Fred called that he thought we had better camp, we were wet to the skin and half frozen. Pack-ropes and halter straps were glazed with ice, and the horses were hard to catch. The pursuit of one into the brush meant a cold drenching from the icy drops and snowflakes with which the bushes were laden. The fire was hard to start and every foot of the ground oozed with moisture. Fingers were numb and chilled as we tugged at the knots on the diamond hitch (the system of loops and hitches by which the packers make fast the packs), but at last we got through with it all and our tents up, and then came the time of day that is bliss on the trail. To me it is more enjoyable than even a dry camp, for one does so appreciate the high-heaped camp fire and the luxury of standing before its cracking flames and feeling the heat soak through one's chilled body, until, little by little, the warmth of new life glides through the veins, creating a sensation more fraught with physical delight than any that whisky or alcohol ever shed on man.

On the fourth day, we were at the Upper Bow Lake, as beautiful a spot as a man can find in a seven years' journey in the mountains. The lake is about two miles long, apple green in colour and cold as ice. On three sides, rise the superb snow-crested mountains. On the north end of the lake

was a bit of timber, and in the shadow of these firs we pitched our tents. We camped here for a day, and Pink and Ricky went on a fishing expedition on a raft in the lake, the former catching a big trout which weighed about four pounds, while Ricky was satisfied with a few lesser ones. Bow Lake is within a few miles of the summit, between the valley of the Bow and that of Bear Creek, which, rising among the snow-caps and ice-born lakelets, flows almost due north into the Saskatchewan River, into the basin of which we entered as we crossed over the divide. The trail here fell away a thousand or more feet in a few miles, and then wound through the most dismal burned-over tract that I had ever seen. It was a hard drag down the steep descent, and as we had made a late start, we camped that night amid the tall skeletons of former monarchs of the forest, that stood like ghostly sentinels above our dreary camping ground. "Camp Desolation" we dubbed it, from the first moment we unsaddled our horses.

Just above our camping ground, we ran across an old grizzly's track, and a perfectly fresh one at that. Beside the trail, according to Fred, who was a master-hand at reading signs, had been the body of an old pack-horse that had played out on the trail and had been killed. This bear had scooped out a shallow grave with his claws, and had buried the

whole carcass, as a dog buries a bone. "Them is some tracks," remarked Fred, as he stood looking at the handiwork of this particular bear, "and I suspect that that is some kind of a grizzly, if any one should ask you." But I yearned more for the Yellowhead Pass than for game, so next day we arose bright and early and pushed further down the trail, now swinging along the sides of the mountains, and now down into the bottom, alongside the rushing torrent of the turbulent little stream of Bear Creek. This was really the first of these mountain streams that I ever knew intimately, and I came to hate and fear them more than the big, deep-flowing rivers like the Saskatchewan, for, though their volume does not compare with the larger streams, yet the dangers which they present are far greater, for the current is much swifter and their beds are filled with great boulders, which are for ever rolling and grinding along down the stream. A cold day will stop the melting of the snow on the mountains, and in twelve hours there will be but a trickling brook, but if there comes on a rainy night, followed by a clear hot day, your placid little stream of yesterday may be transformed into a perfect demon of a booming torrent, that will snatch an unwary pack-horse from his feet on the fords and sweep him off down the stream like a chip of wood.

For five days we travelled down this narrow

valley, and listened to Fred's disquisition on these mountain brooks, and on Bear Creek in particular, for we knew that we must cross the creek just above the point where it flowed into the Saskatchewan, which stream we had to cross above this junction, for naturally it is the safest way to cross streams piecemeal, than to cross one main channel, where the water is sure to be deep, and perhaps swift and dangerous as well. The last days on the trail were hard and there was much cutting to be done, as with the exception of a few trappers and an occasional tourist hunter, no one had penetrated into this region; as far as I know, we were the first party over the way that year, which always means cutting out the timber that has fallen down during the storms of the winter.

On July 21 we pulled out on to the flat at the mouth of Bear Creek. Here is a regular four-cornered compass. The main stream of the Saskatchewan flows almost due east and west, rising some thirty or forty miles back, among the glaciers that lie on the Continental Divide, while Bear Creek comes roaring in from its southern valley; almost directly opposite the North Fork of the Saskatchewan flows in, which rises up in the north country into which we were going. The mountains stand like city buildings at each of the four corners, and all of them are between eight and ten thousand feet

high. The main river is the same creamy, " hurrying to keep a date " looking stream, that I had known on my previous trip, when my friends entrusted themselves to a raft on its surface. The point where we were now encamped was some forty miles west of the great gap from the plains, through which we had tried to find our way in the thunderstorm three years before. Had we succeeded in that enterprise, we would undoubtedly have reached this identical spot, and might have returned over the very route which we were then following, in from Laggan. Out on the little flat by the junction of the rivers, I discovered an old stump, squared on four sides, on which was inscribed in blue keel (engineer's crayon) the name and date (1883) of one of the Canadian Pacific Surveys, which had forced its way up the Saskatchewan River, looking for a route through the mountains.

As I stood, studying out the weather-beaten scrawls, I could not help but think of what this valley might have been. The survey had all been run this way and the plans made, as I had been informed, but the man thousands of miles back East, drew a blue pencil through the programme in favour of the Kicking Horse route, and with that decision the wilderness here received a reprieve, of how many decades no one knows. Had it been otherwise, this very spot might have been the site of a pros-

perous town, and along this flat, we might have seen gigantic engines snorting back and forth with their endless trains of trans-continental traffic. These great forests of timber, through which we had been dragging our weary way for the past few days, might have been alive with men and would have

A Rotten Bit of Stream for the Pack-train to Navigate.

rung again with the swish-thud of the axes in the hands of lumbermen, as they levied their tribute from nature's wealth. But no, the decision was for the other route, and so to-day we see this valley tranquil, unpeopled and still, and the mighty Saskatchewan flows on and on in the majesty of its lonely grandeur. Bear Creek, undammed and un-

fettered by the hand of man, comes tumbling and surging down its narrow valley, pouring its blue waters into the ice-born froth of milky waters that is characteristic of the Saskatchewan, and all over the valley hangs the silence, the peaceful silence, that sings of nature, serene and undisturbed.

After we had camped, Fred came down with me and together we looked over the scene of our ford for the morrow. Frank Hippach, too, who was skilled in the ways of the mountain streams, came to gaze at its volume, that had transformed its modest current of a few days earlier to an incredibly ferocious extent. Pink, the philosopher and friend, also stood by, looking at the water and listening intently to the comments of both of our experienced men, as to whether or not it would be safe to try the ford on the morrow. "Well, she's sure a-bilin," commented Fred, "but I guess we'll have to chance her anyhow;" and, with a final look at the frothing turmoil, we returned to camp for our early supper beneath the spruce trees among which stood our tents.

Early the next morning, Fred looked at Bear Creek and, as it was a cold raw day and the stream was running down each hour, we decided that we would wait until noon and then make the crossing. Immediately after breakfast, my friend Pink called me quietly aside and suggested we should walk down and look at the river; besides, he said he wished

to have a talk with me. By the river's edge was an old dead log and on this we sat, and my friend began as follows: "I have weighed the matter carefully, and all things duly considered, I do not believe I am a coward. In fact, I have examined myself thoroughly, and say with all frankness and a sincerity in my belief that I speak the truth, that I believe myself destitute of fear, for my ideas of the hereafter are sufficiently concrete to eliminate any dubiousness or distress as to the possible unfortunate outcome of our present enterprise. As a matter of fact, were I to definitely foresee any impending misadventure, I do not think I should feel any trepidation as to our undertaking that which we now have in hand. I say this to you freely and with no disingenuousness underlying my utterances, and I have no doubt but that you will readily understand my reasons and motives for thus unburdening myself;" and with that he smiled in his mild philosophical abstracted way, as he settled himself more comfortably on the log.

No act of the day was too trivial for this lovable comrade to take as a centre for some line of abstract thought and weigh and reweigh it from all points of view. Some casual comment by one of our men at breakfast, he would take with him on the trail, and, after a long eight-hour struggle with fallen timber and downed horses, he would draw me to one side

the moment we were in camp and say, "Well, after thinking over what Scales said this morning at breakfast, I am convinced that his reasoning, and hence his conclusions, are fallacious and utterly unsound, for the following reasons;" and then, while perchance supper awaited us, he would proceed to expound and thoroughly dissect some casual utterance of the morning.

I loved his mind, and of all the companions I have travelled with, there has never been one who was a more thoroughly delightful intellectual comrade, for on a rainy day he was ever ready to launch into a finished and accurate lecture on almost any subject in science, philosophy or logic. He was the most erudite young man I ever knew, and withal as generous and unselfish as the day is long. As I looked at him, sitting on the log, I realized that what he said about fear was doubtless true, and waited with interest to hear what was coming.

After a slight pause, he continued: "I have studied our mutual friend Stevens (you notice I say friend, and I use the word in its highest sense, for I recognize in this denizen of the wilds a man of exceptionally high qualities, and am indeed pleased to call him such), and I believe him to be a man of great experience in the woods and on the rivers. I think much of Hippach as a man, but

I cannot admit much of his reasoning on subjects pertaining to higher thought, and yet I cannot help but give considerable weight to his pronouncements on the phenomena pertaining to the wilds. Last night, and in fact ever since we left the Bow Summit, I have carefully weighed and analysed the comments made by them respectively on the dangers pertaining to mountain streams. They have stated that Bear Creek is exceptionally dangerous to cross. At first, I was inclined to doubt it, but since last night I have thought over their arguments, and their deductions are doubtless correct. In a word, I am ready to admit, indeed more, I am convinced that in our prospective crossing of this stream"—and he waved his long and delicate hand toward the tumbling torrent that boiled at our feet—"we are confronting a menace that may not only prove fatal to your project of reaching this Yellowhead Pass, but may, indeed, prove to be the termination of all of our earthly enterprises." He paused for a moment and, rubbing his hand over his chin in a thoughtful way, he continued with evident relish: "It has seemed to me, therefore, that the present occasion is a singularly happy one in which to introduce between us a discussion of the philosophy of death, and what I shall term the logical evidences of a future life."

Well, we sat on that log the entire morning while, in a painstaking way, my friend presented in a remark-

able manner the history, pro and con, of Christian evidences, and as carefully analysed the most recent thought on the entire subject. Thus we sat, until Fred shouted that lunch was ready, for we were to take a light repast before making the ford. At 2 p.m. the horses were packed, and with Fred in the lead and the horses strung out with one of the party between each two or three, we waded into the ford. But the stream had gone down considerably and, although one horse was carried down from the ford and his pack thoroughly soaked, he crawled out intact on the opposite side of the bank. Pink rode into the seething froth with the calm smiling visage of the martyr being led into the lion's den. I think he was really a very brave man, for he had convinced himself that we were facing a grave danger, and I am sure he suspected that this was his last ride ; yet, I don't think he felt either fear or the slightest hesitancy in tackling the job in hand.

We were to cross the main river a mile above, but when we came up to the crossing place, the entire banks were flooded and Fred announced that we could not get our horses across without soaking the packs, for the Saskatchewan was up in the brush. So we went into camp for two days, during which time we built a small raft on which to ferry over our baggage. It matters little whether beds or miscellaneous stuff get wet or not, but every drenching

to the grub pile means a big deduction from its quantity, especially from such commodities as flour, oatmeal and perishables. The horse that had floundered at the ford was loaded with flour, which meant that the sacks had to be opened, and the outside crust, formed by the water, removed and thrown away. Every such wetting to flour means a loss of about 10 per cent., and every such loss means so many days shorter trip; but, though we disliked the delay, we at once recognized the wisdom of preserving our food supplies, for, as Pink said, "I cannot but recognize the cogency of the argument and must perforce acquiesce in the soundness of the following conclusion." When the philosopher spoke thus, I knew that as far as cold logic went, the position must indeed be unassailable, and so we waited.

CHAPTER VI

In which we make but meagre Progress and finally turn back for want of Grub

TO build even a very modest raft takes at least a day and we figured another day in which to ferry our outfit across the river, and then get the pack-train over after it. As soon as he learned that we would be in the same camp for several days, Pink suggested that he would be glad to take Ricky and one pack-horse and go up the river four or five miles, to a point where Fred said he had once seen a moose. So we caught up a horse for them, and with much pains, packed up some beds and a lot of other stuff (which, as Fred said, should be enough to last them two weeks). "What do you prognosticate, Stevens, as to the probability of our enjoying favourable weather during the coming night?" asked Pink before starting.

"What do I which?" remarked Fred, removing his pipe from his mouth, as we sat about our breakfast.

To have his words misunderstood, or not understood at all, always bothered Pink, but he concealed

his annoyance and replied, " I said prognosticate. What I wish to ascertain is, whether or not, in your opinion, we shall enjoy a fair night, or is there some probability of inclemency of the elements ? "

" Oh," said Fred, " you mean, is it going to rain ? Well, you can search me ; but if I were in your place, I would not bother with a tent."

Crossing the Saskatchewan on a Raft.

So the boys started off with shot guns and ammunition, and a large supply of food loaded on patient little Billy. About noon, Billy came ambling in serenely and joined the rest of the pack-train. That evening, we completed the raft and at about ten o'clock, it began to rain—poured, in fact. All the evening, as we sat in our tent before the great camp-

fire, Fred kept chuckling to himself and finally remarked, " I'd give two bits to see the Professor about this time. Do you reckon he'll pull for camp now, or

The Camp Cook " going into action."

wait until morning ? " But I was convinced that my friend would never quit ; nor did he, for it was not until we were seated at breakfast the next morning that he and Ricky came toiling up the trail, packing

their blankets and beds on their backs. The philosopher looked resigned, but excessively dignified.

"A very trying experience and a most unpleasant evening," he remarked, when he was seated at breakfast. "Our horse ran away, and Ricky, to whom I had entrusted the matches, was unable to

The Saskatchewan River in the early stages of its career.

find them. I was also unfortunate enough to soil my clothing by falling down in a mire. I cannot pronounce the evening in any way a success. Scales, will you kindly favour me with a clean plate? I observe that this one has not had your attention since our last service." And then, in stoical silence, he ate his breakfast.

It appeared that he and his companion had failed to agree on any particular of their trip from the moment they took their leave of us, and it was due to the latter, according to Pink, that Billy had taken his leave, for, as he said, "I do not think our pack-animal, which I have remarked to be a very docile one on the trail, would have affected his escape, had Ricky been more attentive to the task I suggested he assume—namely, to either hold him by the leading strap, or make him fast to a tree or some other staunch object. This he failed to do, and we were therefore compelled to transport our own luggage in the manner which you have observed;" and he looked sadly across the Saskatchewan, as he remarked further: "Do you think Stevens really believed we should meet with a moose, or was his suggestion that we spend the night in that desolate spot in the nature of a joke?" But the question was never answered, for by that time we were ready for the fording of the big river. It was obvious from the start that we had been wise to ferry our stuff, for the river was running swift and deep in the centre, and, before we were forty yards from the shore, our saddle-horses were in swimming water, with only their noses and their tails above its surface. We finally landed on a sand-bar on the opposite side and put up camp for the night.

The next days we spent in pushing our way up

the north fork of the river, and a worse trail I had never encountered up to that time, for we were held up day after day in fallen timber, and by the horses

Fall in the Saskatchewan River, near its source

getting into muskeg and mire. However, no one complained; least of all, Pink, who seemed to receive each new hardship with a certain stoical

delight. After the first few days the valley became extremely narrow, resembling a canyon in many places, with the result that we were constantly crossing and re-crossing the river, and scarcely did we make a ford that one or the other of the horses did not get into swimming water. This was very discouraging to me, as each night in camp, when we took inventory of our grub-pile, we found that it had materially diminished from the wettings it had received during the day. After a week of travel, we came to a fork at the head of the valley and, turning to the right, followed up what seemed to be the main river. We must have climbed two or three thousand feet in the next four miles, for nearly all the way the horses were zigzagging back and forth up a trail that was on a hillside with a slope well on to 45°. One horse was actually overbalanced by his pack slipping, and rolled, end over end, down the steep declivity, until caught between two trees. But these toughly built little ponies are hard to kill, and, though it took fifteen minutes' work with an axe to cut him out of his predicament, he seemed none the worse for his tumble.

The Saskatchewan, which had now shrunk to a quarter of its size where we had crossed it above Bear Creek, was down in a deep valley, but the roar ahead told us that we were approaching its fall from the plateau between two lofty side ranges, toward

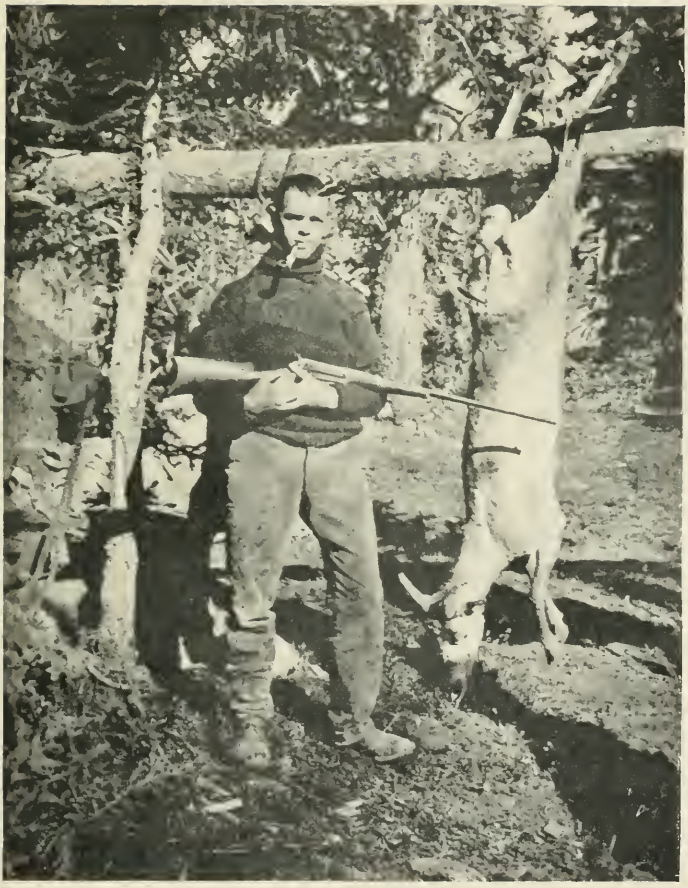
which we were climbing. Finally emerging from a clearing, we halted on the trail, as we viewed with wonder the giant fall. The whole stream had cut a deep gorge below the level of the plateau, and out of this gorge gushed tons upon tons of water, as from a tapped hydrant at the corner of a city street.

A Mountain on the Saskatchewan River, near the junction of Bear Creek.

That night, we camped in an ideal spot, and the next day went for an abortive sheep hunt towards the end of the valley, for we were well up toward the summit from which the stream took its head. We obtained not even a sight of game, although the valley was thickly dotted with fresh tracks. When night came, we overhauled our grub-pile, and, as

Fred cogently remarked, "We've got to get some fresh meat to make up for the loss of our grub, or we ain't a-goin' to get to the Yellowhead Pass, or nowhere else." We discussed tentatively the splitting up of our party, I taking one man and a few horses and pushing on, but as the outfit was not picked with this idea in view, we soon abandoned that plan and decided to make another effort to get some meat.

About two o'clock the next day, Fred, Pink, Ricky and myself saddled up our horses and started for Mount Wilcox, about ten miles from our camp, where Fred thought we would certainly pick up some sheep. We followed the river up to its source, where it was not over a few feet wide, and then swung off to the east a bit on to a plateau, between two ranges of mountains. We left our horses in the timber and proceeded on foot. The valley was filled with bunch-grass, with little pools and patches of snow scattered here and there. The mountain to the west rose some 4,000 feet above us and went up to an edge like a knife, while that on the other hand was almost equally steep and forbidding. The mountain on our left fell off nearly 6,000 into the valley of the Sanwapiti River, which is perhaps the true head of the Athabasca, although it is not generally so-called. Across from this mountain was a gigantic ocean of ice peaks and glaciers. The country is as wild and



One of the Tender-feet and a Mountain Sheep.

rough as any I know, and an ideal place for mountain sheep, who love these secluded high and narrow valleys, where they can come down and nibble of the bunch-grass and drink of the pools of icy snow-water, and still keep their telescopic eyes peeled in all directions, with no trees to impede their vision. Then, too, they have their ragged mountains within easy reach on either side, so that at the slightest warning or alarm, they can make for the slopes and in a few minutes gain the most inaccessible peak on the horizon. Sheep are always wary and hard to hunt, but the more they are bunched, the harder they are to approach, for each addition to a herd means an extra pair of eyes which are continually spying around when they are awake. The ground was wet and soppy and the going hard, so we sat down at frequent intervals.

Once on the hunting ground, Fred was as alert as a hawk; and, while we were discussing the probability of getting a shot at something, he suddenly spotted his quarry; there, sure enough, some seven or eight hundred yards away, were two bunches of them, twenty-one in one group and fifteen in another, which is a good aggregation of sheep to see in this day and generation. But the sheep had seen us even before we had spotted them and were already slowly moving off across the valley and climbing the steep side of the mountain. They were

dun coloured, almost like a deer, and when they got against the dark shale of the mountain we could not distinguish them at all, but now and then they would cross some finger of snow, stretching down from the bleak summit, and then we could see the little spot which they made against the white. We adopted strategy, and divided up our party, Fred and I going across the valley and climbing up the mountain on the opposite side, with the idea of coming on the sheep from above, while Ricky and Pink were to remain at the bottom and keep the attention of the animals diverted from our flanking movement.

It was after six in the evening that we saw the sheep, but it is light until nearly eleven in that far northern latitude in the summer, so we had at least four hours of daylight in which to conduct our campaign. Fred and I started off, and after climbing steadily for nearly three hours, we reached the top of the mountain, and crawling over its back, looked down into the valley below, where we could just make out the boys, who had gotten tired of waiting and were now advancing on a frontal attack. For a moment we could see nothing of the sheep, but suddenly a movement among the rocks just below the summit, revealed a group of a dozen, slowly climbing toward the peak of the mountain. Every little while they would stop and look back into the

valley. It was nice to watch them, for they were utterly unconscious of our presence, their entire attention being devoted to the little specks moving toward them from the valley. Crouching down among the rocks, I watched them with fascination, entirely forgetting that we needed meat, until Fred whispered, "Well, aren't you goin' to shoot, or did you just come up here to admire the scenery?"

I at once turned loose and emptied my magazine into the bunch. The first shot went short, throwing up a little spot of gravel, whereat the whole group were thrown into confusion, jumping here and there among the rocks, uncertain from which quarter the menace was approaching. No doubt, it was confusing too, for they had their eyes glued on the danger beneath them, when the whistle of the bullet and the thud at their feet brought the menace into their very midst. Then came the report of the rifle from one side, while almost instantly came the echo from the other. To add to their confusion, both of the boys, who were now scrambling up the rocks toward them, opened up with their rifles, and for a few minutes that spot among the rocks must have been the target for many flying bullets, which kicked up chips, stone and spurts of dust, while the sharp cracking of the rifles, and the echoes rolling back and forth across the mountains, created as much tumult as a small-sized battle. Between us, we had

The mountain where we killed five sheep. These met their sad end near the patch of snow highest up on the razor-back.

picked three fat ewes out of the bunch, two of which were killed outright, while the third was shot through the fore-quarters. The balance of the group climbed with lightning rapidity over the crest and disappeared. The one that was wounded started back down the valley, and with every other step, its front legs would collapse and it would somersault, end over end, for several hundred feet down the steep slide of loose shale that covered the razor-back of the mountain. I started after it down the side of the hill, missed my footing, and fell end over end, giving my ankle a nasty wrench, but in the excitement I picked myself up, overtook the sheep and put an end to its misery with my hunting knife. I then sat down on its carcass, rejoicing in the thought of fresh meat, not a bite of which we had tasted for weeks.

At this moment, Pink and Ricky came snorting up the mountain, the former panting out, "Do-do-do-you think that-that my ball has effected a-a-a- lodgement in one of the cre-e-e-atures?" Without waiting for a reply, he and his comrade toiled on up the mountain, where they met Fred, and together they all disappeared over the sky line. After getting my own breath, I got up to follow, but found to my chagrin that I could not stand. I glanced at my watch and discovered that it was after ten, and as I looked down into the valley, I saw the great full moon just poking its silver disk above the ragged

line of the opposite mountain's edge. The sun had set hours before, and I just began to realize that it was cold, for I was up among the patches of snow, and I had left my coat strapped to my saddle in the timber when we had left our horses.

Daylight soon faded out entirely and only the

The smoke from the kitchen fire drifts lazily across the valley as we pack up the horses after breakfast.

light of the moon shone on the valley, turning the little pools of water into sheets of silver, and tipping the snow peaks beyond with the sheen of its argent rays. But, with the disappearance of daylight, there came a bitterness of cold that I could not have believed possible. There was nothing to do but wait, which I did, until long after midnight, when

my companions returned, hallooing for me and rolling down the hill ahead of them two more sheep which they had picked up over the mountain's edge. Between them, they carried me down, when one of them went for my saddle-horse.

In the meantime, Fred, with deft fingers, gutted the kill and had the hindquarters of one animal skinned and cleaned before the horse was led up. It was just a little before two o'clock when we got into the timber again and made our camp in a lovely grove in the shelter of a great rock, and here, before a roaring camp fire, we roasted great slices of sheep meat and ate it with greater relish than any viand I ever tasted. As we had no blankets or beds, we lay about on the soft grass until daylight, when we started back to camp, which we reached about noon. Meanwhile, my ankle had swollen to twice its normal size and was so painful that I could barely place it in the stirrup, much less stand on it. The long ride through the bush, with trees and brush striking against the pulsing extremity, is not a memory which I care to linger over even now. When I slid off my horse and hobbled into my tent, I realized that there would be no travelling for me for some weeks, and my dream of making the Yellowhead Pass on this trip went glimmering.

The next day, Fred went back with a couple of pack-horses and fetched home the sheep that we had

Drying sheep meat over a smoke pit.

killed. As my condition prevented further movement for some time, we dug a smoke pit, and every shred and atom of those sheep was carefully cut off and smoked and dried, and then stored away in sacks where the flies could not get to the meat, with their unpleasant habit of laying eggs all over it. If ever sheep gave up their lives at the psychological moment, in which to bring relief to wanderers far from home, and all but "broke" in food, it was surely those five that we killed in the mountains that night, more than ten years ago.

Although the fresh meat off-set much of our loss of flour, sugar, etc., which had been ruined by the rivers, it no more than made up for the two weeks' delay which we experienced, lying about the camp, waiting for my ankle to mend sufficiently so that we could hit the trail once more, and that time we were so woefully short of everything that our one idea was to get out as quickly as possible. The way we had come was such a long and draggy one, and the rivers had proven so destructive to our supplies, that I was anxious to avoid the return by the same route, and Fred suggested a possible trail which would bring us back to the railroad via the Mountain House and out at Lacombe, where I had fitted out for a previous trip three years before.

The suggested route lay over a pass and down into the headwaters of the Brazeau River. From the

summit, we could look full fifty miles down the narrow valley, which was filled with timber. While we were crossing the summit, I was fortunate enough to pick up a fine big ram—one of the best I ever saw. It was rank luck too ; for, incredible as it may seem, he was asleep in the rocky trail, high above the timber line, as we came jangling along with our

The big ram that very foolishly stopped to look back.

pack-train, with its bells and shouting drivers. The noise aroused him, and he was up on his feet in a jiffy, and in a few springs was on the crest of a small rocky hill that bordered the trail. Had he been a more discreet ram, he would never have stopped, and there would have been no head hanging in my hall at this minute ; but, like Lot's wife, he turned

to look back from the summit, and that was his undoing. We camped in the first handy bit of timber and cleaned and smoked our ram. His was not the biggest head I have seen by a long way, for it only measures fifteen inches around the horn, which do run up to eighteen, but it is the most symmetrical, as both horns make a complete loop, passing the eyes by five inches, and are absolutely the same length. I never look at this gentle-eyed face, hanging up at home now, but I think of his gallant appearance as he stood on that heap of rocks in far-off Alberta, looking down at our pack-train.

Well, to make a long story short, after nearly a week of hard travel, we found the Brazeau Valley impassable. Fallen timber, no trail, and impassable canyons blockaded our way each day, making our progress very slow. Finally we came to a dead stop in a perfect abbatis of down timber, which seemed to stretch for endless miles beyond us, and that night we decided that, as our grub-pile was so low, we could not experiment further with an unknown trail, but must turn back and make for the railroad over the same one we had come in by. After a short discussion, it was decided that I should take one man and one pack-animal and strike for the railroad, thus relieving the grub pile of at least two hungry mouths, for we two alone could travel two

or three times as rapidly as the main train, with its long string of horses.

And so it was that Frank Hippach and I started with one horse on the long and lonely ride. It was not a pleasant trip, as we were travelling eleven and twelve hours each day, in heat and through rain, on as meagre a diet as I have ever experienced, consisting of three small bannocks a day, a little bacon and some coffee. Sugar, milk, oatmeal and practically everything else had been exhausted before we left our party. Our own supply had been well calculated, for at the meal before we struck the railroad, we ate our last small bun, and when we finally pulled into the station at Laggan, we had between us only a pinch of salt, which I had in the pocket of my chaps.

And so ended my first expedition for the Yellowhead Pass.

I met my philosophical friend, more philosophical than ever, last year in New York City. One of the first things he spoke of was our trip of ten years before, in the Rockies. "Do you know," he said, "since then I have given much thought to the good men that accompanied us. I hesitated at that time to pronounce definitely upon Hippach's ideas as to religion, but much deliberation since that time has convinced me that they were utterly fallacious. The errors in his argument, that I suspected then,

have now become clear in my mind, and there is no question but that his premisses were totally unsound. I liked the man, but were I to meet him again, I feel that I should rebuke his deductions severely, even though, in so doing, I should doubtless incur his severe disapprobation. But I should feel it my duty to go into the matter more thoroughly than seemed to me expedient at that time. Upon the trip as a whole I look back with much pleasure, and the incidents which at the time created an unpleasant impression on me, I am now able to recall in retrospect with no other feeling but one of amusement. It is with especial interest that my mind reviews the episodes leading up to our attack upon the mountain sheep and to the hunt itself. I recall with astonishment my own overwrought condition of mind, at the moment when I beheld the agile animals fleeing in panic up the steep acclivity of the mountain, while my unaccustomed muscles performed the functions necessary in discharging my piece at the quarry then in full flight. I believe my mind was never so thrown from its accustomed channels as by the excitement of that moment. The rapid discharge of firearms, the cries of the hunter, echoing back and forth across the valley, made the most vivid impression upon me, which I find has remained in my consciousness with remarkable distinctness. I cannot recall that I ever experienced the desire to

kill, other than on this occasion, and the intense pleasure with which I saw one of these animals fall, pierced with a projectile from the gun I had myself discharged, was certainly a unique emotion, of which I would not have imagined myself capable. Psychologically, the entire occasion has been of great interest to me, as indicating the sudden emphasis

Pack-horses taking a ford.

which an experience of excitement may give to primitive characteristics which we have utterly ignored as non-existent, and which are thus brought forward with the same intensity as that with which they are present in the most primitive species of man. Thus, you will recall, no doubt, that I, a man of undoubted reserve and one of unquestioned self-

control, was thrown into a delirium of excitement, in which, I dare say, I cried out and shouted aloud in the ardour of the chase;" and he smiled reflectively, as he passed his delicate hand over his long chin, and recalled it all.

For a delightful companion in any situation, I would never desire a better one than Pink.

CHAPTER VII

Which is a very short one, and Recounts with Commendable Brevity the Failure of a Second Expedition to Reach the Yellowhead Pass

TWO years elapsed before I was able to get back on to the trails of the Rockies, and to renew my efforts to get up into the country of the unknown and to the Pass, which, since the time I had made my last effort to reach it, was being seriously suggested in the Canadian Press as a probable route of a trans-continental line to the Pacific. So far, the suggestions were mere gossip, for the project at that time had not passed the period of incubation in the minds of those who breed empires and throw the web of their imagination across undeveloped continents.

And so it was that in 1903 I found myself once more at Laggan, this time one of a party of four tourists and three packers. I was not, however, the organizer of this expedition and, as I formed but a very feeble minority, I was little better than a "looker-on in Venice." Of my companions, one was a mining engineer from the East, the second was a

mountain climber who, between spasms of shinning up inaccessible peaks, was a professor in an eastern university, while the third was Dr. August Eggers, of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and I mention his name because I found him to be a prince among men, and one of the most genial and companionable fellows one could wish to have upon a long trip into the mountains. Fred Stevens was, as usual, the head guide, while a brisk young cow-boy from Montana was on the job to help pack and hunt horses in the brush, where they wandered during the night, which, as I should have mentioned before, is one of the most predominant characteristics of the pack-horse. Our cook was a chap by the name of Nat something-or-other, who played on the banjo and sang coon songs every odd moment during the day.

Well, now there really isn't much new to describe of the country on this particular trip, for it was just as we left it in Chapter VI ; and, no doubt, similar to its condition a thousand years ago. We were delayed in getting away, as our mountain climber friend was off, down south of the railroad, with two Swiss guides, tearing over mountain peaks and ice fields, and distinguishing himself by the ascent of the unascendable. About the time that we figured on leaving Laggan, word came that he had set his heart on wooing the snow-clad summit of some remarkable mountain at the other end of

Alberta, and as we did not wish to waste time we decided to push through to the Saskatchewan at Bear Creek, lightly loaded, and then let Fred go back to Laggan to bring up the fourth member of the party, together with the balance of our grub-pile. The trail had been improved a great deal since the last time I travelled that way, and we slid through to the Four Corners in the mountains with unwonted dispatch, and made a camp on the river bank, where we were to await Fred's return from Laggan, to which point he started the very next day.

Here we camped, with many mosquitoes and much monotony, for ten days, whiling away the time by building a bridge across the Bear Creek canyon, which was some five miles up Bear Creek from its mouth. It was quite a remarkable place too, as the whole stream went roaring through a gorge 80 to 100 feet deep, and not more than 10 feet across at the top. Over this we threw logs and then cut out notches on which we let in a corduroy road-bed of cross pieces. This job took us about four days. We then cut some trails leading from our bridge to the Saskatchewan, which would avoid the fording of Bear Creek, and then, having nothing better to do, and not caring to go around by our new route, we packed up and forded the creek, making our camp at the identical spot where I had camped two years before. We waited a day or two and then

the genial "Doc" and myself, deciding that it was intolerably slow, packed up, threw our saddles on our horses and started back over the trail to Laggan to see what had become of the relief expedition with new grub supplies, which had been overdue for several days. We met Fred and his string of

Packing up in the morning.

horses about 12 miles from camp, where we all sat right down on the spot and made ourselves happy for the night. He had with him grub, pack-horses, and last, but not least, the Mountain Climber. Now, I do not wish to give out the impression that this individual was not a perfectly good man, or that we did not like him, for he really was a respectable

person, but he lived, breathed, slept, dreamed and exuded nothing but mountains. We had "chimneys" for breakfast, "ice axes" for lunch and "crevasses" for supper, while the camp-fires at night simply reeked of "stone monuments" (which I believe is what they call the bunch of rocks that they put in a heap on top of a mountain climbed for the first time), ice fields, and sudden death, engendered by unfortunate gentlemen falling over precipices at the wrong moment. Now I dare say that the mountain-climbing game is a delightful one, but two days after the Mountain Climber joined us, it was for ever queered with me. All other topics were tabooed, and we listened by the hour to the histories of every remarkable escapade pulled off by the fraternity, from Timbuctoo to the North Pole, until we dreamed of hardy adventurers tied together with fragile pieces of string, creeping up hair-raising cliffs, only to have the rope that bound them as one man part, precipitating them into fathomless depths. Now, I had climbed mountains in my own trifling experiences, when I had been hunting for mountain sheep and other game, and I always despised it cordially; but, when one is following a fresh track, expecting any moment to come upon the quarry, there is something to keep one going; but this idea of risking one's neck, just to get a view and having one of those infernal monuments

put up never appealed to me. However, the Doctor and I were very polite and listened patiently to it all.

When we got to our camp on the Saskatchewan, the very first thing that the Mountain Climber spied was a great white peak about ten miles away. "Ha," he said, as he slipped from the saddle, "we must not leave this spot until we have ascended that monarch of the Rockies;" and he rubbed his hands in glee. Well, we all wanted to be obliging, as we looked upon this person as a sort of newly arrived guest. So the next day at dawn (about 3 a.m.), we all started for the foot of the aforesaid monarch. We got on to the slope of its rocky sides about 10 a.m., when the sun was just beginning to get down to a regular red-hot sizzling business. I have had some very unpleasant days, but thinking them all over, I believe this was about the worst. The sides of the mountain were ragged and rocky, and every few minutes we would trip over boulders, cutting our hands and barking our shins, but no Crusader, bent on the capture of Jerusalem (was not that the idea?), was ever so keen on the job as our Mountain Climber. If one of us would sit down to rub his bruises or get his wind, he would cry out, "Come, boys, let us be on. The day presses and we must reach the summit before I——" And so, with sweating bodies and aching limbs, we kept stumbling forward.

The Doctor, who especially was not built for this gymnastic work, never said "Die," but kept stumbling on and on. By and by we got up to about 10,000 feet (I think the mountain was 11,200 feet high). I suggested that we could see the view from this point as well as from the top, but at this I got a look from our leader that nearly froze my blood in my veins. What had gone before was mere child's play to what was to come. Long fingers of ice and snow, reaching down from the summit, had to be crossed again and again. Every time we crossed one of these, the expert would explain to us that a single false move would precipitate us to sudden death, which looked perfectly feasible to me, as it also did to the Doctor. Then, just as I thought he would propose to abandon such a hazardous undertaking, he would ejaculate, his face all aglow with the enthusiasm of a martyr bent on some lofty purpose, "Let us be on." Then we would all shake hands and bid each other be of good cheer, and start out again. After we got over some dangerous ledge and on to firmer footing, with our hair standing on end (I speak particularly of my own), the Mountain Climber would sit down in great glee, and explain to us how any moment we might be carried off with an avalanche, and back up his statement by a dozen anecdotes about sudden deaths in far and distant lands. I encouraged the stories, as it gave

us a chance to rest and catch our breath, but only for a short time, for he would be off again into an even worse place. Finally, we came to an abrupt ledge of ice. "Ha," said our leader, "this is indeed a menace to our progress. We must cut a way in the ice, step by step, but remember, fellows, a single false move and naught but our crushed and mangled bodies in yon ravine will remain to tell the tale."

I craned my neck over a ledge and, sure enough, thousands of feet below was a perfectly good ravine, in which 100-foot trees looked like the miniatures in a Noah's ark. I did not want to be a crushed and mangled body, neither did "Doc.," so in desperation we both said so. The Mountain Climber looked at us in disgust and pointed out that another thousand feet would see this untamed monarch of the wilds subdued forever. We would go down through the annals of history as the conquerors of Mount Whatever it was (I forget). We objected that we stood a better chance of going down into the ravine than in history, and we damned both the annals and the stone monuments, one of which was to be erected on the summit. Anyhow, we said the view from where we were suited us fine, and that we would wait while he climbed up the annals of history to his own glory, and that we preferred he should build the monument on the summit all by himself than that some one else should build monuments over us in the

ravine. The Mountain Climber was very much annoyed and said he would go alone, at which we all shook hands again, and off he started. After twenty minutes of fiddling about, he came back and said he could not make it alone, and as that was the only way we advised the attempt, we all turned round and started for camp, which we reached about 10 p.m. We were never invited on another climbing expedition.

The next day we crossed the river, and as I recall it, the Mountain Climber's horse had to swim, at which I rejoiced exceedingly. Though he was in his element hanging at the end of a rope over a fathomless gorge, he was completely silenced on horseback. This was our day, and though we had cause indeed to return his scorn, we said nothing. I shall not enlarge on this trip. We all travelled as hard as we could, and at last got up into the pass, a little beyond which, two years before, we all shot the sheep. We had all rebelled against the mountaineering "stunts," even to the cook, who had been inveigled into joining one summit expedition, and who had good-naturedly hung by his toenails from all sorts of untenable cliffs, and finally lost interest. "The pipe of the Mountain Climber," as Fred would say, "was out." He wanted to go home. The mining engineer had found no mines, and nobody wanted to go to the Yellowhead Pass, so one fine morning we caught up the cayuses and "hit the trail" for Laggan.

We made the trip back to Laggan in fourteen days, as I recall it, and it rained every day but one. "Doc." Eggers was the kind of a man that can be wet day in and day out for two weeks and get up each morning with a smile. I have borne an affectionate memory of him ever since. The mining engineer smiled occasionally, the Mountain Climber never. On the shore of Upper Bow Lake, his horse fell into the water, and we all smiled that day except the Professor.

Thus with no profit, save added experience, ended my fourth trip.

CHAPTER VIII

Which is an Instructive One, Introducing a Gigantic Enterprise

UP to this point, the contents of this volume have been extremely trifling. Let me admit it boldly in order that the reader may be aware that the writer entertains no doubt as to the true character of what the patient peruser of the last pages has undergone. But, inasmuch as the events described have been about individual experiences of very unimportant persons, how could they be other than trifling ? The balance to follow may be of the same nature in spots, where the personal end is dealt with, but I can also promise that it will be relatively instructive in places too, for all of my latter day trips into the mountains have been into the vast new Empire of Western Canada, which is being opened up by the construction of the new Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad, that magnificent conception which is linking in one stroke the Dominion seaboards of the Atlantic and Pacific. Inasmuch as the coming of the railroad, where it would go, and what it would do, was the single topic of conversation around

almost every camp-fire in Canada, from Edmonton to Prince Rupert, the new terminus on the Pacific, and inasmuch as the coming of the steel into our wilderness was the mainspring of all our future campaigns beneath the shadows of the glaciers, I am going to devote this chapter to what is perhaps the most gigantic railroad project that has ever been conceived and executed as a whole, not even excepting the Canadian Pacific or the Trans-Siberian, for both of these were distinctly government projects and built for strategic purposes, the former to hold an Empire, British Columbia, and the latter to gain one—namely, Siberia. These latter were both built irrespective of cost and admittedly for the purpose of linking zones of Empire, whose mere distance and isolation threatened the dissolution of the bonds that held them to the parent country.

The story of the Grand Trunk Pacific is the story of the conception, battle for recognition, and the ultimate achievement of the idea of one man, Charles M. Hays,—an idea so vast in its scope that the successful completion of the project will mark an epoch in the history of the Dominion of Canada, and of the social and industrial life of that portion of its population that lives west of the Great Lakes and Hudson's Bay. The man who conceived the idea, and the little band of determined Canadians who rallied around him, overruled an opposition

Dominion wide, won over a board of reluctant directors, and carried the redoubt of an army corps of shareholders by assault, and then wrung from the Parliament and the people of Canada a charter which made financing possible. And the story of the achievement of Charles M. Hays and his friends is a

One of our camps in the Yellowhead Pass. This place is less than twenty miles from the summit of the Rockies and the photograph gives some idea of how low is the altitude of this pass.

living proof of the fact that romance exists as much to-day as it did in the Middle Ages, when kings and emperors found attending to their own wretched affairs at home so wearisome that they rounded to all of their adventurous and idle friends (usually comprising the bulk of the court), and carried them

off on futile junkets to rescue the tomb of the Saviour from the hands of the infidels. Nowadays, it is the romance of meeting less picturesque difficulties, and of driving home ideas and policies, which makes for the uplift and the higher standard of living of millions. It means opening Empires, wherein armies of men, women and children shall find for themselves the means of living and raising themselves to any degree of prosperity that their ambition and industry are fitted to raise them to. It means that, in a day when commerce and avarice are driving down the standards of life and living in the vast eastern centres of population, a new country, almost the width of this continent, will be thrown open to a multitude of people, bidding them come and grow rich on the fertile acres, which for centuries nature and an all-wise Providence have been preparing for the day when she might pour out a world of plenty into the lap of an eager population. In a word, it means new opportunities for the millions to go forth into a virgin country and take, each for himself, the prizes which are open to all who are willing to exchange industry, labour and thrift for the best things that the world has to offer—homes, independence and culture.

This, then, is the romance of the twentieth century, and to me it seems a far more potent one than the spectacular doings of the Middle Ages, when the greatness of men was measured by the extent of

"I picked up a little ram just above the timber line."

their depredations on their fellows. The great men of this generation are those that bring blessings to their neighbours, than which there is no greater open to any man or to any nation,—the means of making possible for the individual the winning from nature the independence which she offers to all who are worthy in the struggle. For every new acre thrown open to the plough, and for every bushel of grain or produce that springs therefrom, the world is just so much the better, and some poor wretch, in some distant zone of huddled, congested humanity, has just so much more to eat, or gets it for just so much less. It is, then, the Empire builders of to-day who are our industrial heroes, and of no mean prominence as one of such heroes stands Charles M. Hays who, by his individual efforts and exertions, has brought about the opening of untold millions of acres. And here is the story of how and why he did it.

Along in the early years of the present century, it came to pass that the patriarch of the Canadian railroad world, so long the "cock of the walk" in the Dominion world of transportation, having fallen into competition with the methods of a few Americans who were running other roads in Canada, was gradually falling into a condition of decay and suspended dividends, which made the English stockholders cry out with dismay. It was obvious to all concerned that a change of management and methods was

needed and needed badly. The result was that Sir Charles Rivers Wilson, of London, England, was entrusted with the fortunes of the American enterprise, and his first move was to persuade Mr. Hays, then of the Wabash Railroad, to come over and prescribe for the Canadian invalid. He came as General Manager of the system, comprising then some 7,000 miles of the best potential railroad property across the border. Within thirty days, every section man on the system knew that there was something doing, for the property from end to end began to feel the vitalizing influence of a live man. New and heavier steel began to replace the ancient streaks of rust, along which Canadian freight was wont to wobble uncertainly to its destinations. Powerful new locomotives replaced the wheezy antiquities of earlier decades that heretofore had dragged the minimum load at the maximum of delay and complaint. New and efficient passenger equipment actually began to attract the travelling public from other lines, and the directors actually beheld tourists moving between competitive points on their lines, and paying fares for that privilege, which was an almost unheard-of situation.

The interested public gazed in wonder, but the end was not yet. The impossible came to pass. In an incredibly short time, the announcement went forth that the Grand Trunk would pay a dividend.

No one could credit such an impossible statement. But it did, and for the first time in seventeen years. And then, the Manager, at a meeting of the directors, mildly suggested an idea which had been germinating in his mind since he had begun to study the problem.

To pay dividends this year and next was certainly important, but the problem that his mind was already trying to solve, was to ensure permanent dividends, not only for the present, but for the decades and all time that was to come. The basal facts were simple enough. The Grand Trunk railroad, with its first entry into the Canadian railroad world, owned trackage on which practically 75 per cent. of the freight of Canada originated. Much of this freight slipped from its grasp when the loaded cars crept over the switches of the Grand Trunk on to competing lines. For the immediate present, Mr. Hays saw dividends in handling freight to monopoly points and to such points as they could compete for and beat their rivals in getting. But his mind, ever logical, reached beyond this to a further conclusion. To survive in the final analysis of modern competition, the carrier must not only originate the freight but must carry it through and deliver it to its final destination.

"But how can that be done," was the query of the startled directors, "when we have our most western line in Canada reaching to North Bay? Certainly, we can do no better. Let us be content

with what we have and let 'well-enough' alone."

But the new Manager was not one of the "well-enough" kind, and he proposed his alternative, which nearly made the conservative Englishmen fall off their chairs. What he proposed, in a word, was a new trans-continental line, which should choose for its route the shortest practicable line between the Atlantic and Pacific in Canada. This new system, which he was asking for as unconcernedly as a locomotive engineer requisitions a supply of waste for his daily run, should be linked with the parent company, and then the Grand Trunk would indeed have a network of lines that would enable them to handle freight from origin to destination in all points in Canada. Their future dividends would be for all time and they could defy all competition, for theirs would be a house built upon rock, whereas it was now an edifice erected on sands, which the last hour of fierce competition that the future would surely bring, might crumble about their ears in final ruin and defeat as far as dividends were concerned.

But his arguments fell on deaf ears. As to the Englishmen, the first dividend in seventeen years looked too good to jeopardize on a theory that might win out and might not, for to them "a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush"; and so it was that the idea remained in the stage of incubation only.

In the meantime, the Southern Pacific Railroad,

having a few internal spasms of its own, and being unable to get satisfactory results from local practitioners, cast longing eyes on the General Manager of the Grand Trunk and offered him the Presidency of that system if he would come and straighten them out, with the result that in 1901 he resigned his Canadian position and went to California. But the methods of one E. H. Harriman, who was then czar of the railroads on the southern Pacific slope, did not coincide with those of Mr. Hays, and he threw up the new presidency in disgust after a short time.

As the Canadian road had felt his presence within thirty days after his arrival, so did it feel almost instantly the release of his hand from the throttle, and the very moment it became known that he had severed his connection with the Harriman interests, the Grand Trunk eagerly besought him to return. After six months, he accepted the offer and took up his position in Montreal as General Manager and Vice-President, with practically a free hand to go as far as he could on the Pacific railroad project. The directors reluctantly consented, saying that it mattered not, for the shareholders would never sanction the new programme.

But Mr. Hays was on the war-path now; and, packing up his grip, he went over to London and called a meeting of the stockholders. Nearly 2,000 assembled, and fully 80 per cent. of them

had come with the firm determination to veto, once and for all, this hair-raising undertaking. The American, however, was looking for just such opposition, and he was loaded to the guards. For two hours and a half he assaulted the stronghold of the British imagination, laying out his programme in the most minute manner, proving his argument point by point as he laid his programme before them. When the vote was taken, 90 per cent. voted for him to go ahead. Back he came to Canada, where he and Sir Wilfrid Laurier put their heads together, and he finally persuaded the Premier that the Government should stand or fall in its support of the vast undertaking. As the directors and shareholders had been captured by the logic of Mr. Hays, so also was the Premier and his Cabinet, and at a general election the country voted overwhelmingly to support the Grand Trunk Pacific railroad in its project to build a new, all Canadian, trans-continental line. Parliament was assembled in the longest session in its history, and the outcome was the agreement between the Grand Trunk Pacific (which for convenience in organization was to be a distinct company from the old Grand Trunk Railway) and the Government, which has made the project possible.

The scheme was to build the shortest line from coast to coast, the eastern terminus being at

Moncton, in New Brunswick, and the western terminus at Prince Rupert. The work was to be divided into two broad sections, known as the Eastern and the Western, the former extending from the Atlantic to Winnipeg, and the latter from Winnipeg to the Pacific. As the consensus of opinion was against land grants, as in the case of the Canadian Pacific railroad, the Dominion Government agreed to build the first section of the line at its own expense, turning the same over to the Grand Trunk Pacific on completion, on a fifty year lease, at a price per year to equal 3 per cent. on the cost of construction, the operating company to be exempt from all interest charges for the first seven years and responsible only for any possible deficit in operations. A further proviso was included which authorized the railroad to capitalize defrayed interest on the cost of construction for another ten years, the same in its turn to bear 3 per cent. interest. After fifty years the lease might be renewed or the operations taken over by the Dominion.

The western section, from Winnipeg to the coast, is being built by the railroad company. It, in turn, is divided into the prairie and mountain sections, the first extending across the plains from Winnipeg to Wolf Creek, and the other covering the eighty-four miles through the wilderness from Wolf Creek to the Pacific. On the first of these sections,

the Dominion guarantees both principal and interest on First Mortgage Bonds up to $13,000 a mile, and on the mountain section it guarantees bonds and interest in a similar way on 75 per cent. of the cost of construction, while the Grand Trunk Pacific parent company guarantees the securities, both principal and interest, on the remaining 25 per cent. of the cost. Thus was the dream of the American railroad man suddenly brought from the realm of the impossible into tangible reality.

The main line of this new railroad across the continent, according to the surveys, comes to 3,545 miles. When the project was finally determined upon, the enterprising originator of it all came along with another surprise. He had spent the greater part of his life in re-building railroads, but this one was to be built right from the start. There should be no grade on it in excess of four-elevenths of 1 per cent., or 21 feet to the mile, and no curves in excess of four degrees. The bridges should be of steel, and the entire enterprise should be built first-class from the start, regardless of expense, for, according to the expert, it costs about three times as much to rebuild an operating line as it does to make it a good one from its inception. The idea of the low grade was at first jeered at as being impossible, but even as he had encountered the obstacles imposed by men, so did he go forth to meet the barriers of nature. Vast

sums were appropriated, and for the next few years the desolate wildernesses stretching clear across Canada were filled with engineers and surveyors, hunting for the now historic "four-tenths grade" which all Canada is talking about. And they found it at last, just as the *Deus ex machinâ* had found means of breaking down all other opposition.

The Yellowhead Pass pierces the Rockies in their main range at an altitude of 3,723 feet, which is nearly 2,200 feet lower than the pass through which the Canadian Pacific breaks into British Columbia. Thus, with the single exception of a short stretch of seventeen miles in British Columbia, where there is a 1 per cent. grade, the wish of Mr. Hays was gratified.

Then came the building. As the President of the United States touches a key in Washington which releases the machinery of some great industrial exposition half across the continent, so did Mr. Hays turn loose, by a single word, the armies of his construction crews, which almost simultaneously began to rip this highway into the New Empire of the West. Building was also started from the East, and every month the gap that holds back the completion of the enterprise is melting before the gangs of men who are tearing avenues out of the sides of mountains and hewing a highway through the forest wildernesses of hitherto untrammelled British Columbia.

CHAPTER IX

Which Reverts to the Experiences of Five Men and Twenty-two Pack-horses, en route to the New Empire of the Unopened West

THE spring of 1909 was an unusually late one in Canada, and it was the first week in June before the snow was sufficiently gone to make "pickings" for the pack-horses possible in the mountains. As the only feed the animals get after they leave their winter quarters is what they can browse upon and pick up on the trail, it is obvious, no matter what the exigencies may be, that it is unwise to move ahead of the spring sunshine, which brings with it the grass in the valleys. It was five long years since I had been within the portals of the Rockies, save in a Pullman car, within which time the survey of the Grand Trunk Pacific had been pushed through to the Coast, and the route to be taken had been definitely named, though the permanent and final location of the right-of-way was still a matter of some uncertainty. It was known, however, that the road leaving Edmonton, Alberta, was to cross the McCloud River, near its junction with Wolf

Creek and thence, reaching over a divide, hit down into the great valley of the Athabasca, enter the mountains at Jasper Pass, and then swing south, making the big dip through the main range at the Yellowhead Pass. Here it was to strike in on the head-waters of the Fraser River and follow its valley for about 200 miles north-east to Fort George, from which point the engineers had sketched the line up the Nechaco Valley and its tributary the Endake, and so on over another summit into the Buckley Basin, and down this to its junction with the Skeena River. Here, bending southward, it was to follow that turbulent stream to its mouth, near which point the engineers had picked the harbour town site of Prince Rupert for their western terminus.

Fred Stevens, who in the years since I had seen him had been cruising about in the Yellowhead Pass country, with a few short trips down the Fraser, was again with me in charge of my outfit, and had named Lacombe as the best starting-place for our expedition. The construction crews of the Grand Trunk were still a little east of Edmonton, though it was promised that the railhead would be well on its way to the Rockies before the snow flew in the fall. The trail from Edmonton, westward, according to Fred, was in dreadful condition, owing to the fact that freighters had been hauling in provisions during the winter; at best it was a swampy and

dismal route, and now it would be feet deep in mire and muskeg, through which it would take us a month to travel. Our point of destination was a certain mining property over in British Columbia, some 60 miles down the Fraser River from the Tête Jaune Cache, an historic landmark at the west end of the great pass. My four previous trips into the west had taught me a few things, and for the first time I came to the starting pole without friends, for this time I was bound to reach my destination, and we did not want the uncertain support of strangers to the life.

We had planned our date of departure for the first moment that we could find food for the horses, so that we might have a good four months of fair going before we should be turned homeward by the snow and heavy weather. We had in our outfit twenty-two horses, and three men, besides Fred,—a cook, an assistant packer, Nick Stevens (Fred's brother), and Sawyer, a young civil engineer, whom I had picked up at the eleventh hour to accompany the party and make a rough map of the country into which we were heading. The Government maps that I had seen were hazy to a degree, and many of the maps that circulated as accurate were, to my knowledge, 40 and 50 miles out as to the location of rivers, which is a whole lot when depending on them as you journey forward in a wilderness.

Our plans had been that the party consist of only four, but Sawyer came as an after-thought, joining our party two days after we had left the railroad, and after we had laid in our grub-pile for the summer, which spelled a shortage in our food supply at the start, for five men eat one-fifth more than four men (if my arithmetic is correct). This fifth man, however, was young and active, and he ate about three-fifths more than the other four, though, of course, no one begrudged him that, except the cook, who complained that the buns cooked late in the evening were devoured by midnight, and that he therefore had to rise at daybreak in order to have more for breakfast. This seemingly unimportant item turned out to be a most unpleasant feature, as the cook watched the engineer at each meal to check him from over-consumption, and, as they occupied the same tent together, the subject was one of constant discussion between them, and I know not how many nights I have fallen to sleep with the strains of the chronic quarrel between the two drifting off into my dreams.

Our route was the same as I had taken many years before, the first point aimed at being the Rocky Mountain House on the Saskatchewan. The change that had come over the country in a decade was almost incredible to me. At that time, we had seen neither man nor house, from the time we had left the fringe of civilization that skirted the railroad,

but now all was different. In place of the trail, we had a wide wagon road all the way in to the Saskatchewan, and there was hardly a day that we were not in sight of some farm-house or ranch. Eighteen miles out was a small town with its post office, and nearly every day we passed a post office, which, as I learned, was the centre to which dozens of farmers came in from a radius of 15 and 20 miles to get their mail, and to buy their supplies at the stores. Our pack-train, which a few years before had been practically the only means of getting in and out of the country, was now the object of general curiosity, and every one we passed turned and stared at us in amazement, for the pack-train, like the trapper, is getting to be a thing of the past; and, like the pioneers, recedes before the coming of civilization.

In six days we were at the Saskatchewan, the same roaring, seething Saskatchewan that I had seen so many times before, and under so many different moods. But the state of mind of the river no longer bothered me, for, lo, and behold! at the very crossing that used to cause us so much anxiety, there was now a fine ferry-boat which crossed the whole pack-train in two trips. Just across the river, in the very shadow of the old ruin of the old Hudson Bay Post, was a fine ranch-house and outbuildings of the rancher who ran the ferry. Across the river, so he told us, was a post office, and all of his talk

ran to the future of the country and the coming of the railroad. His land, he told us, was worth $20 an acre, and Heaven only knows how much more it would be worth when "the steel came." That magic phrase, which is echoing to-day across the wilds, was heard on every side. It sounded a bit far-fetched to me then at the Mountain House, which I had always looked upon as the jumping off place, but later in the summer I got used to it, for, no matter how far from the railhead we might be, whether beside some deep-flowing river, 500 miles from civilization, or in some dense jungle of timber where the foot of man was all but unknown, almost the first topic around the camp-fire at night was, "Well, boys, when do you reckon the steel will be here?"

The country around the ranchman's home on the Saskatchewan was fine and flat, and his stock looked sleek and healthy, while he spoke glibly of splendid crops of garden truck and produce which he garnered the year before. He, like many another of the pioneer type, had gambled that the good land would sooner or later bring the steel, for where the crops and settlers flow, comes the railroad, poking along in the wake of the satisfied pioneer, taking away his crops and bringing a new population and increased values. As we talked with this man that first night, I felt sorry for his optimism as to the railroad, for

as far as I had heard, there was no serious talk of any such project ; but to-day, not three years afterwards, the line is surveyed, and in a few months, I am informed, a branch line from the Canadian Pacific at Red Deer will be there, and my friend who ran the ferry and told us of his great crops will, no doubt, be cutting up his quarter section of land, which stood him a few dollars an acre, into town lots, for as much per lot as the whole investment cost him when he went in there. I stood amazed before his neat buildings that day, looking across the river to the point where my friend Sid, ten years before, had plunged into the icy water to get a wounded goose and a bite of fresh meat. Then we were eighty miles by a rough trail from a post office or even a habitation, both of which now stood within a hundred yards of the place where we had cooked that goose, and to-morrow comes the railroad, and one of Canada's new towns is booming ahead with electric lights and plans in the air for a street railway.

To travel these days in Western Canada is to doubt nothing, and though you stand in a wilderness to-day, scoff not at your neighbour who is calmly staking out ground for a hotel or a town site for the morrow ; for, as likely as not, his dream may be realized.

As the horses were all being packed for the first time that year, we lay over for a day at the Moun-

tain House and let them get the first rest of the trip and pick up a bite of the luxuriant feed that was the first real green bite they had had since leaving. There is no use trying to hurry a pack-train on a long trip, for undue haste means skinny horses and sore backs, which, in turn, means either dead ones before the summer is over or long halts for recuperation. A pack-train moves over a good trail about two and one-half miles an hour, and can travel six hours a day, and it is rarely policy to force the gait, no matter what a hurry one may be in. A single badly folded blanket, the twisted end of a strap, or a badly balanced pack means a sore-backed horse at the end of the day, which it may take two weeks of travelling with no pack at all to heal and before the horse can be used again. This would mean heavier packs for the rest of the horses and a tendency to run them down, and a horse that starts to run down at the beginning of a trip never would have a chance to pick up with constant travel, bulldog flies and mosquitoes. A string of sixteen pack-horses, besides the saddle-horses, such as we had when we left the Mountain House for the real wilds, means a vast amount of attention to keep them all in fine fettle. Every pack must be put on with the greatest nicety, and each side-pack weighed to see that it just balances the other, so that packing up each morning is not the slap-dash, happy-go-lucky

enterprise that one might imagine it would be.

Every night, on going into camp, the horses are turned loose to ramble, the worst wanderers being "hobbled" and a few being belled. As soon as daylight comes, the horses begin to move around, looking for feed, and if one is not up betimes, the chances are that the horses may be anywhere from five to ten miles from camp and scattered about in three or four different groups. So our days on the trail began anywhere from 3 to 4.30 a.m. By 5 o'clock, if we were lucky, the horses would be rounded up and tethered to trees, while the rest of us had breakfast. A few minutes for a pipe and a bit of gossip, and the day's work commenced. While the packers are saddling the horses and packing them, the cook is cleaning up his outfit, and the rest are taking down the tents and packing up the camp equipment. All of this takes an hour or two, and if we are actually on the move at eight, everybody feels that the day is well begun. Fred, who knows the trail, rides on ahead, with axe and rifle strapped to his saddle, and the pack-horses are rounded in behind, a man dropping in between every three or four to keep them moving down the narrow highway of the forest.

A six hours' drive is a good day's work and brings one into camp anywhere between two and three in the afternoon, if the going has been good, but if there has

been trouble during the day, it may be, and often is, five or six in the evening before the distance planned on is knocked off, and the various kinds of troubles are enough to try the patience of the most gentle and kind-hearted creature in the world. Fallen timber means delay every few minutes, while the head man chops through trees and clears away brush that impedes the progress. At every such delay, a few of the horses will become wedged in ahead, where one cannot reach them, and then they will start off at right angles to the trail. When you chase them, they will gallop off, leaping over impossible barriers, tearing their packs, and at last coming to a complete stop in some patch of fallen timber, where it may take twenty minutes more to get them out, and for which a path must be cut. So half the time when the man ahead hallooes that the way is clear to go ahead again, all the other men are off in the timber, jumping over logs, bruising shins and tearing clothes in frantic efforts to get the perverse beasts back on to the trail again. The next hour may bring us into a soft piece of ground, and every few minutes a stop must be made to extricate horses that have gone into muskeg or mire up to their bellies. This usually means taking off the whole pack and hauling the animal out, one man pulling on the halter strap, while another pushes, and a third may be prying him up with a pole.

All of this is part of the day's work and for the first few hours is accepted as such, but when noon comes around and the distance planned is but half covered and perhaps it has begun to rain, then the patience of all becomes fagged and frazzled, and the language that goes floating up and down the line of the pack-train would fry bacon, if it could only be diverted into some such useful channel. But it is the etiquette of the wilds that the troubles of the trail must never be taken into camp, and the moment the horses come straggling into the little clearing where the night is to be spent, the profanity and abuse that has been making the air hideous for hours melts away, and men that have been cursing each other and the horses in every phrase known to the West (and their vocabularies are by no means limited) settle down to peace and amity. In an hour supper or dinner, or whatever you like to call it, is set out on the pack-cover, and peace and harmony reign supreme.

Afterwards comes the making of the camp, and if the weather is unpromising, the pitching of the tents and the building of the great camp-fire, the joy of the wilderness. If the sky is clear, nobody bothers about tents, but each makes his bed where the ground looks the softest, and crawls into a resting-place that no city bed can ever equal. The sky, black as velvet, with the stars above

one's head, the gentle sough of the wind in the tree-tops, the soft murmur and ripple of neighbouring waters—where, oh, where, in civilization can one find such an environment and such lullabies with which to close in peace, hope and serenity the labours of long and arduous days?

Nick Stevens was a great hand at making a "happy home" wherever we camped. As deft with an axe and old horn-handled jack-knife as any carpenter with a whole box of tools, he could do anything, from the chopping down of trees to the building of a cabin and furniture. Fred, whose whole life had been of the wilds, cared little or nothing for comfort. A few sticks of wood for a camp-fire and a nest in the pine needles under some old spruce made him happy as a king. But Nick was different. As soon as supper was over, he would drawl, "Well, boys, let's see what we can do to brighten her up a bit;" and then he would take an axe and search out some dead tree, take a few preliminary wallops, just to get the range, and then go at his task with the precision of a pendulum, every stroke falling to a hair in the path made by its predecessor. After about ten swings, the great chips, as big as dish plates, would begin to fly about the stump of the tree, and almost before one knew it, a great pine, 14 to 16 inches through, would come crashing down. If one examined the stump, it looked as though the job had been done

with a single stroke. This tree would then be cut into six or eight lengths of 5 or 6 feet, and then we would have a camp-fire that would crackle and snap long after we were in bed ; aye, and in the morning, by stirring about with a stick, and piling up the charred edges, one would soon have the breakfast fire ready to do business.

I have travelled with a lot of good men, but I never knew a finer than this same old Nick Stevens. An old lumberman from Michigan, who had knocked all over the West as a boy, and who had returned to farm the old place in Michigan, he found time once every few years to make a trip back into the wilds and mountains he loved so well. A hard man to get acquainted with at first, but beneath his six-foot bulk and quiet ways was a heart as gentle as a woman's. Personally, I wouldn't have traded him off for any one of the many real good men I have ever met, if I were looking for a day-in-and-day-out, smile-in-the-rain, stick-with-you-in-trouble kind of a companion.

Well, I have gotten far afield from the Mountain House and our own particular trip, but the next weeks were not eventful, though there was plenty of hard grind that makes muscle, sleep, and a digestion that would handle ten-penny nails without a murmur. Our trail lay up the Saskatchewan for a day or two, when we struck off through a piece of timber and

crossed a stream that, as far as I know, never had a name. Then we made over a small divide and came out once more on the Saskatchewan, just across from the place were we had built the raft in 1898 to send Sidney B. and friend number three down to the Mountain House. From this point, we had as rotten a bit of trail as one could find in a month's journey. Muskeg and mire and down horses hour after hour was the prevailing order of events for the next three days. At last we were well out of this and following along the very first range of the Rockies. Bleak and barren, they rose above the edge of the foot-hills, like the cliffs that hem in some barren coast. Finally, one day at noon, we turned at right angles to our trail and entered into the shadow of the overhanging cliffs, and at last were in the Rockies, whose shadows and snow-capped peaks were to be our constant companions for the days, weeks and months to come. But our trails became fainter and fainter as we pushed in, there being many hours each day when we would be travelling by direction only, with long delays to chop trail and corduroy the bad places where mud and swamp threatened our party.

But all of this is dull and uninteresting. Our way, in a word, led up a stream called Mire Creek (well named by the way), and from that up a stream that eventually flows into the Brazeau, which is itself a

tributary to the Saskatchewan. This stream we followed for several days, winding with it through a gap where it came racing down from further depths within the ranges. Diverging from this, we pushed on and on above timber line, following one of its forks, which grew tinier and tinier, until it was lost in a spongy flat of tundra and moss between two giant piles of mountains that towered above us. Pushing past this summit, we pitched camp for the night just at timber line. It was just twenty-one days since we had pulled from the railroad; and, from the time we left the settler at the ferry, we had not seen a single human being. The next day the cold, icy breezes, blowing from off the snow-caps all around us, had us out early, and packing up we followed down a stream that grew with each mile of our progress. This, I believe, is now called Coal Creek. In any event, since I went that way in 1909 great coal-fields have been discovered, and already two railroads are projected and surveyed into this identical valley, which will soon echo and re-echo with the whistles of giant locomotives, rumbling down its length with endless strings of cars loaded with fuel.

A few more days brought us over another summit and down into the basin of the main Brazeau River, which, later in its journey, swallows up all these other branches, along which we had been wending our

way for the past fortnight. Here at our camp, we met a mining engineer, who was out prospecting for coal, and we talked with him of his finds. Prospectors are always optimistic, and I took his gilded talk of limitless coal with a grain of salt ; but he was right, it seems, as the two railroads mentioned above can testify. It seems hard to realize, but there is no doubt but that within a few years that whole valley, then so utterly destitute of any sign of man, will be alive with miners, tearing out the vitals of these mountains that for so many aeons of time have stood wrapped in the silence of isolation, hoarding in their bosoms the fuel wealth that, these coming years, will bring heat and warmth to ten thousand hearths scattered across the plains from the fringe of the Rockies to Winnipeg.

CHAPTER X

In which we Escape Destruction in a Bush Fire and Negotiate Three Passes

AFTER a few days of travel up the Brazeau, we found ourselves in the same country of fallen timber and no trails, that had hung us up in 1901, the only difference being that that time we were trying to force our way down the valley and out to the Mountain House, while on this occasion we were reversing our programme; and again, at that time we were at the tail end of our grub-pile, while now we had just started in on it. It is a tiresome and tedious procedure chopping trail and pulling horses out of the mud, and I am sure it must certainly be equally boresome to read about it. In fact, I find when I glance back over these pages that there is altogether too much of this sort of thing, but it forms such an important part of the day's work that it is almost impossible to get away from it.

One of the troubles about writing a book of facts is that adventure is always wholly inadequate to the demand for it. When one is writing fiction, it is so much more simple. Every time the pages grow dull, one can introduce a mystery, a hairbreadth escape

and somebody's sudden death, which is sure to brighten up and enliven the narrative and encourage the reader to keep "a-goin.'" It seems a pity that I cannot do anything romantic about this stage of my narrative, for here we are well into our fifth trip in the wilds and I have not killed a single person, not even a pack-horse or a mountain climber. The best I can do at this moment is to introduce a very snappy little forest fire which nearly wound up our campaign on the spot.

It happened in this way.

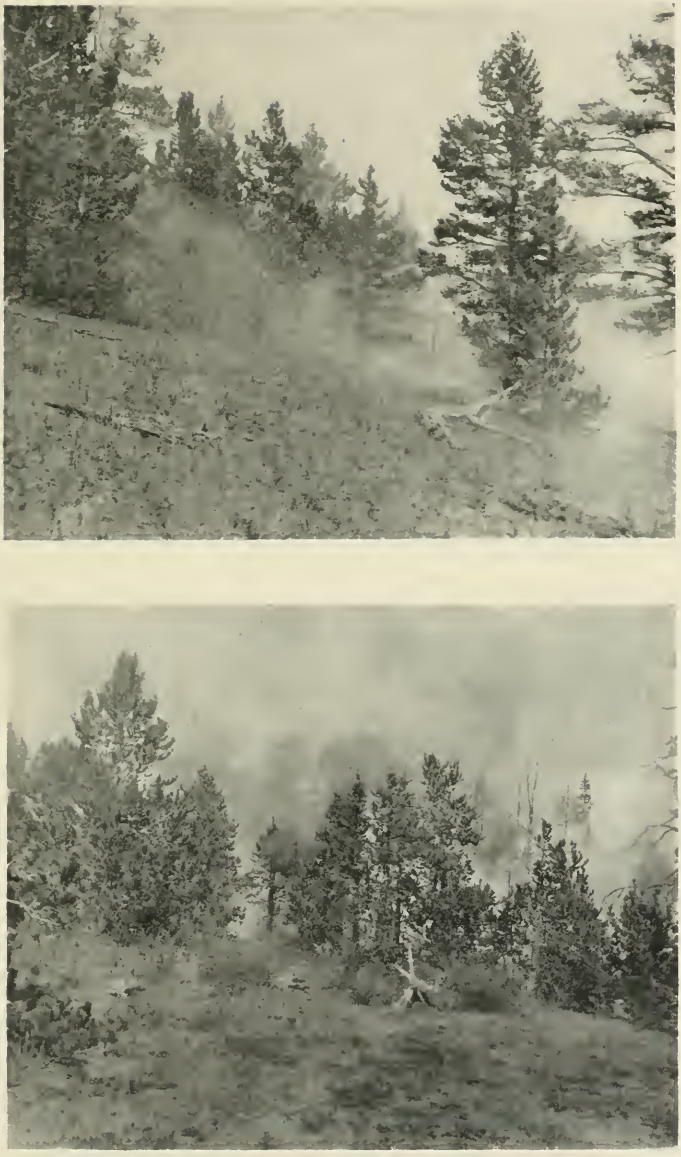
We were camped one morning within about ten miles of the very head of the Brazeau valley and about five miles from where we expected to turn off from the north, and drag our outfit up through a tiny crack between two snow-caps and over into the Athabasca Basin, which we expected to follow down to the Yellowhead Pass. This particular part of the valley had been travelled but very little, except by the Indians, and was well timbered with fine fir and spruce trees, among which the faint trail wound about like a serpent. The last week on the trail had been red-hot, the sun beating down day after day from a cloudless sky, until everything was as dry as a bone. Hot weather is hard on the horses, as it makes them sweat under their pack blankets, and the chafing is apt to start sore places, which means endless trouble and delays to follow.

So on this particular day we decided that we would make a short drive of a few hours to the place where we were to turn off for the climb over the snowy pass aforementioned. This would give the horses a chance for a rest before tackling the big climb and the long hard day that it would take us to get over the summit and down to timber and horse feed on the other side. As we had had no fresh meat for weeks and the grub-pile was melting faster than looked good to us, I decided to take my rifle and push on ahead to see if I could not pick up a bite of something choice. As Fred was uncertain just where we would camp for the day, I told the cook to start a smudge as soon as they settled on a location; and, as I would probably be above timber line somewhere when they settled down at about noon, I could see the smoke and direct my course back to the camp.

I started off in the brisk morning air before the sun was fairly above the mountains' edge.

Oh, how infinitely glorious are the mountains in the early stillness of the day! There was not a sound except the rush and tumble of the stream along which I was pushing my way and the dry scrunching of the pine needles under my feet. That sense of solitude engendered by the vastness of the mountains towering on all sides in majestic dignity settles on one like the veriest balm of peace. Hour after hour I picked my way along the valley,

sitting down every now and anon, to drink in the limitless peace and bask in the air and light, unpolluted by any sound foreign to the symphony of little noiseless noises that nature offers to the audiences that seek her out, where man has never tried to tutor her to his own petty ideas of beauty. By noon, I was well up the valley and could look back for thirty miles on the basin, carpeted in green, with here and there the silver thread where the river flashed through openings in the forest. I sat down on a rock and nibbled on a bit of lunch that I had put into one of my pockets before starting. Then I lighted my pipe, and leaning back against a great boulder, watched the little insects buzzing about in the sunlight and the busy ants in a near-by hill hurrying hither and thither, entirely engrossed in the infinite industry of their kind. The sun was hot, but its rays seemed to soak in and in until my whole being was aflood with contentment and physical aloofness from all care and worry. A squirrel leaped and chattered in a near-by tree, scolding at the intrusion on his domain, and with every cheep of indignation his little tail twitched with fury. Lazily I looked off down the valley. "The boys are just about camping for dinner," I thought to myself, and even as the idea flitted hazily through my mind, I saw a thin blue wisp of smoke drift out above a clump of trees four or five miles back in the valley.



The bush-fire on the Brazeau which nearly ended our enterprise.

"By and by," dreamed I to myself, "when I'm satisfied with the sunlight and the peace and stillness of all this, I'll poke along a little further and see if I can't pick up something for our dinner—a hind-quarter of a sheep, for instance. How the boys would howl with delight if I could come in about night-fall with some such tasty viand slung over my back."

But as I watched the thin wisp of smoke I began to forget the sheep, the sunshine and those other beatific visions which had been lazily seeping through my mind. Surely Tom has made a ripping big smudge, for even at this distance it looks like a terrible volume of smoke for a small fire. I sat up stiffly and watched, and every minute the blackness of the smoke grew more dense. Presently I saw a thin red smear outlined in the green, like a flash of lightning on a dark night; then another, and still another, and finally a regular cloud of smoke burst into the air. I got up and started for camp on a run. Every now and then I would pass through a bit of forest, and each time I emerged the smoke and red tongues of flame would grow. Finally I spotted another fire to the south, and at the next opening there was a third and a fourth, aye, and a fifth, dotting the valley in every direction. I expect I covered that five miles in less than an hour and fifteen minutes. Before I struck the camp, I could

hear the roar of the flames and see the great fir trees shrivel up for a second as the heat waves struck them, and then kindle from top to bottom and blaze forth like the roar of a tornado let loose in a cavern.

When I came out of the brush on a run, I beheld my party dragging pack-saddles and supplies down into the river bottom, their faces red from close contact with the heat, and lined with streaks where the sweat had made channels through the crust of dirt and ashes. A glance told me that our camp could not have been better chosen for just such a contingency, for not 200 yards away was the river and a meadow of perhaps 50 acres or more. Into this low wet place they were dragging our supplies, while the horses, with ears pricked forward and hoofs pawing into the wet earth, gazed in fascinated horror at the red roaring tumult that was creeping down the valley ; for, fortunately for us, the wind was blowing down the trail which we had travelled that day, instead of over our path for the morrow. Sawyer, the young engineer, was working like a Trojan. The idea of the wilderness, with nothing to eat, had stirred him to extraordinary exertions, and, as I emerged from the brush, he was galloping down the hill with a hundred-pound sack of flour on his shoulders and trailing a sack of bacon by a rope after him. The others were equally active.

It was really a very inspiring scene for our quiet mountain trail, so I stopped just where I was and took some pictures of it.

Well, we did not burn up after all, but it was a close shave, as I learned that night when we had a chance to talk it over. Tom, the cook, as soon as they had camped and the horses were unpacked, had gone behind a near-by hillock and started his smudge, and had then gone back to his cook fire. The boys were actually seated at the pack-cover, digging into the noon meal, when the flames came roaring around a corner of the hill, and sparks, alighting in the trees about the camp, set the whole mass in a blaze. Dinner was forgotten, and with frantic efforts the 3,000 pounds of supplies and outfit were dragged to the summit of a near-by hill, but before this had been accomplished this point was menaced, and the move into the meadow had followed. It was just here that I arrived on the scene, when the excitement was all but over. Our greatest loss was our two axes, which were overlooked in the hurried flight from the first camp. The handles were burned to ashes, and it took us hours to find the heads among the cinders, after the smoke and flames had passed on down the valley. We did locate them at last, but with their temper utterly ruined from the heat to which they had been subjected.

Tom, the cook, who was inadvertently responsible, nearly sobbed like a child every time the subject was mentioned for a month. But it was Sawyer who was most affected, for after the first heat of excitement he had asked Fred in awed tones what would have happened to us if our grub and outfit had been lost, with us nearly a month out from civilization. "I dunno," Fred had replied indifferently. "Starved, I guess, if we couldn't have picked up some meat;" and he proceeded whistling softly to himself as he shaped a new axe-handle to replace the one that had been destroyed. After that, Sawyer never went to sleep without a close inspection of the camp-fire, and if a log rolled over in the night and a tongue of flame emitted a tiny crackle, he would come charging out of his tent with a bucket of water, prepared to do his duty to the uttermost. We had been especially fortunate in regard to the horses. The day had been so hot that they had not started to stray, and all were so grouped as to give us the least difficulty in driving them quickly into the bottom, otherwise we surely would have lost a part of them, even had we saved our baggage.

But all's well that ends well, and Fred, who stood to lose his entire outfit in business, never even alluded to the incident to the unfortunate cook, for, as he remarked to me, "He sure feels bad enough,

without any one rubbing it in. I don't think he'll start no smudge ag'in. Give me a match, will you ? My pipe's out."

The first copper red rays of the sun were just burnishing the snow-caps with their glory, when we were on the trail on the morrow for the long pull up

The pass cunningly hidden among the glaciers.

the big hill to find the pass, cunningly hid between the glaciers. From the valley one would never imagine that there could be a way for a pack-horse to get up what seems such a steep acclivity, but Fred, who had hunted and trapped in this valley before now, knew an old game trail that wound in steep zig-zags and switchbacks up through a veritable abattis

of timber that, to the uninitiated, seems to hold no possibility of advancement. Turning off sharply to the north along the banks of a purling stream that joins its volume with the Brazeau, we wended our way through the trees, Fred leading his horse in the van, his axe, with its knife-shapened handle, swinging in his right hand. Now, he would lop off at a single stroke an overhanging bough, or halt long enough to cut through some small tree that had fallen breast-high across our path. At the foot of the hill we all halted, and every pack and saddle was inspected and the girths drawn to the utmost for the ascent of almost 2,000 feet which was to bring us out into the narrow defile that leads between the rugged ranges, whose tops are perpetually buried in the depths of their snow mantles. In places the way was so steep that it was all but impossible to drag our beasts up the incline, and every 100 yards we paused to let them get their wind. But at last we emerged from the timber and crept up through the rocks and snow on to the floor of the little cloud-girt valley that is called a pass.

As we approached the summit, the patches of snow, reaching down from the glaciers above, became more and more frequent. Though it was the third of July the summer sun had done but little for us here, for we found long stretches of the soft, clinging, white slush, into which the horses plunged up to their

saddles, struggling and labouring with snortings and fast breathings, as they lunged their sturdy bodies forward. Each foot of the way was contested, it seemed, by the rugged forces of nature, and up there it was the sullen forces of the mountains' white guardian, left over from the storms of winter.

The parting of the ways.

The water flowing out of this pool to the north goes into the Arctic Ocean via the McKenzie River, while that which trickles to the south goes to Hudson Bay via the Saskatchewan.

By noon we had barely passed the divide, which is in an elbow of the pathway over this barren waste. Neither ahead nor behind us could we see a sign of green, only the ragged slopes of the mountains that hemmed us in, with here and there bare, bleak elbows of barren rocks, standing out against the snow. At our feet was the soft white mush, with

now and then a patch of brownish moss, with the small starlike blossoms of the sunflower glistening like pearls set in some leaden metal. At the centre was a cold still pool that was set within a basin in the bleak rock itself, and around the edges of which were small bits of ice. From either end trickles a stream no bigger than your hand. Even the life of

Again and again the horses sink to their bellies in the soft melting whiteness of this cloud-girt pass.

the moving water seemed all but frozen in this desolate place.

I paused for a moment as the significance of it all ran through my consciousness. That slow and torpid flow which leaked off among the moss was the embryo of one of the largest rivers of the world, for this was in reality one of the true heads of the

Athabasca, which is one parent of the mighty McKenzie that flows thousands of miles to the north into the Arctic Ocean, with a mouth that is 60 miles across. Truly a fit beginning, I thought, for a stream that pours out its ultimate end among the ice-pans of the frozen pole. At the other end of our pool there rippled out, more cheerily it seemed to me, another little brooklet which was to flow on and on into the mighty Saskatchewan, and thence over the farm-studded prairies of the new West into Hudson Bay itself.

As I stood, I tossed a match into the pool and gazed with fascination as it drifted indifferently in the centre, until at last, caught by some subtle unseen nether drift in the stillness of the small expanse of water, it bore steadily toward the north, and then sailed on over the tiny fall of a few inches and was off on its long, long journey, through forest and canyon, through plains and muskeg, until at last it should reach that mysterious realm where the stillness hangs like a shroud of frozen silence about the pole, which indeed it does. I let the whole pack-train file past and on as I gazed into the freezing ooze and philosophized to myself of this pool, so symbolic of life itself, where tiny beginnings lead unto infinite immensity. And again, as I watched the match, as it hung idly in the cross-currents, it pointed out to me the innumerable crises which men each day deter-

mine. The barest decision as to our smallest daily acts may as utterly divert the currents of our lives as does this unseen drift that lured the little match from its indifferent attitude. A fraction of an inch this way or that, and its ultimate end would vary by five thousand miles. But as I pondered the water began to seep through the leather of my shoes, already well soaked, and the realization that I was standing in ice-water suddenly brought an end to my ruminations; and, leading my weary horse, I plodded on through the snow and water.

Two o'clock came, and three, and still no sight of the dull green of live timber which spelled the end of our long day's drive. But a little before four, the valley began to break away, and by five we were winding down through the small knotted trees that have struggled with their stunted growth to the very edge of the snow. By six o'clock, we were well down in a narrow valley, with fine tall fir and spruce trees stretching their tops above us. On each side we were hemmed in by giant cliffs. It was a regular canyon, with its floor sown with timber. At last we stopped, for we had been ten weary hours on the trail without either food or rest, and from Fred in the lead to the last pack-horse that dragged its weary way, with head swung low, the entire outfit was thoroughly exhausted.

When at last we camped, we were all too tired and

worn out from the strenuous tasks of the day to do more than stumble about our preparations for the night. Tom, the cook, soon had supper on, and in an hour we were lying on the soft moss, smoking our pipes and cursing the trail that we had passed ; all but Fred, for as soon as he had gulped a few morsels of food, he picked up his axe and slid off down the canyon to see what the morrow had in store for us.

In an hour he came stumbling back through the brush, and struck the axe into a tree-trunk with a force that left it in the bark, quivering like a tuning fork. For as much as five minutes he said nothing, then, smiling just a little, he remarked, " Well, boys, you better all turn in, for I figure we'll hit the trail back over the pass at about two a.m., or whenever it's light enough to see." And then he explained that a mile ahead the entire mountainside had slid from its moorings, and from wall to wall the way was blocked with detritus and giant boulders, each as large as a cottage ; and, worst of all, there was scarcely a bite for the weary and jaded horses to fill their empty stomachs with.

No one said a word, but I don't think one of us thought of anything but our poor little ponies that had laboured so bravely all day through the wet and snow of that pass. And now they must spend a hungry night and do it all over again on the morrow. The night was clear, but nobody cared anyway, so

we curled up in our blankets behind rocks and under trees, while the horses stood forlornly about in the timber, nibbling at the bark, and pawing among the pine needles, trying to make a bit of dried moss fill the cavity where the green and succulent grass should have been stored.

Pack-train entering a mountain pass.

It was still dark when we had breakfast, which means something before 3 o'clock. At 4 we were on our way back, and, to make a dismal story short, we were again in camp on the Brazeau River by one that afternoon. I made the trip alone, on foot, starting ahead of the pack-train, and had a cook fire started when the long string of horses

stumbled into the camping place. No snorting or bucking now, no ears pricked forward and sly nips at comrades, who joggled them at the unpacking posts, but each weary little steed stood disconsolate, sad-eyed and tremulous of lower lip, while its ribs stood out like barrel staves. Even when the packs were lifted from their steaming backs, they stood about among the camp equipage, without any energy to move on, until one rapped them smartly over the haunches with a bit of rope, when they started as though aroused from profound meditation, which may have been the case for all I know. If so, perhaps it was just as well they could not tell us what they thought of it all. All that afternoon, we lay in camp and rested, while the horses wandered about the meadow and ate and ate of the tall lush grass until their sides swelled and their eyelids half closed in the supreme contentment of bellies filled at last.

But our troubles were not over, for the failure to get through to the Athabasca this way meant the laborious trip around, over the pass at the head of the Brazeau, then down the Saskatchewan to one of its forks, and up that, and then over another pass, the one, in fact, where I had sprained my ankle eight years before. We reached this in two days, picking up a small ram not half a mile from the place I had killed the big one on a previous trip. When we

started for the pull up over the rocks in this pass, there was a fine drizzle falling, but as we were in a hurry and had already lost much time, we packed up and started, hoping that it would clear up. But it did not. On the contrary, it poured all day and, to make matters worse, when we came to the last

A mammoth glacier that is the true head of the great McKenzie River

sharp climb that lay between us and the summit we found eight or ten feet of snow lying among the rocks through which the way led. I tried to drag my horse through the slush, while the rest of the pack-train, the men sitting in their saddles, wet and dripping beneath the pouring rain, stood knee-deep in an icy stream, the horses shivering in the cold

water, which was indeed disconsolate to look upon. Half-way up, the snow was packed down into ice, and my horse's hoofs slipped on the cool green of it, and together we slid back.

A long delay and a consultation followed, and then, with picks and shovels, we hewed out a kind of a way along a soft bit of cliff, and after an hour we took the horses up it, one at a time, feeling their way, with ears pricking forward and back every instant and short snorts of apprehension and dismay at the insecurity of their footing on the narrow ledge. But we got over it after a while, and late that afternoon again camped in the green timber, wet, cold and chilled to the bone. A huge camp fire and a square meal soon dissipated our troubles, however, and here too there was as fine horse feed as could be found in the mountains, which also cheered us, for when one has been about a bit in the wilds there is not much pleasure for man if he knows that his patient and willing little beast of burden is suffering.

Another day we travelled, and the next night we were at the foot of the last pass that lay between us and the Yellowhead. If we could not get through that, we would indeed be at a standstill, but in spite of snowy patches and a miserable soggy way for miles, we crossed its summit and finally pitched our camp on a small plateau beyond. Several thousand feet below us lay the cloudy glacier stream of the Sanwapiti

(the Athabasca's true head, as I always aver), and across this and almost sheer above was an enormous mountain, rising well up toward 12,000 feet. To the north, for miles and miles, was a limitless ocean of peaks. There seemed to be no scheme at all to the landscape, but just great handfuls of mountains thrown down in showers. Across from us was a great glacier, its ragged edge hanging out over a straight drop of thousands of feet. A few miles above, we could see a gigantic green glacier that spurned the very valley's bottom with its flattened web of icy toes, while from beneath it, in a thousand tiny rivulets, the great waterway that we were to follow and curse for many days to come took its first grip of life, as each little puny stream rippled busily along the mud and gravel, until the walls of the valley surged together and the thousand little brooklets joined their strength and broadened into a first-class boiling torrent.

That night, we slept sweetly, for we had crossed the divide, and we felt that our troubles were over.

CHAPTER XI

Which deals mostly with the Athabasca River

THE troubles we had had before were mere trifles compared with those we encountered in the next ten days of travel northward, down the river, which swelled perceptibly at every mile of our advance, for from every side roaring streams came pouring down from the surrounding mountains. The past week of hot weather had turned every little brook into a roaring torrent, for the sun on the snow-fields and glaciers brings down a perfect flood of ice water that will make these rivers vary many feet each day. One cold, cloudy day will enable one to negotiate a ford not up to the horses' bellies, while a couple of sizzling hot ones will bring the stream up to such proportions that crossing it is utterly impossible, unless one swims the horses, which is always unsatisfactory, and dangerous besides. When only one day makes the rivers a menace, it can be imagined what a week of blistering sunshine means. The season, as before mentioned, had been late, with the result that in this valley much of the winter's snow was still on the sides of the mountains, but it had about all gone in

the last week and, from the day we crossed into the basin, until we turned out of it, we were in a constant struggle with the high water and the aftermath of the flood.

There had been an old game trail running down along the river's edge, which had been used

Fresh meat for supper !

mostly by the Indians, but for the most part this had been utterly obliterated, while for a hundred yards on either side of the stream the brush was several feet deep in mud and silt, deposited by the rushing waters, which had also swept thousands of cords of wood through the underbrush, leaving a hopeless tangle of tree trunks, dead brush and matted rub-

bish picked up at the head of the valley. Here and there we would skirt along a bluff and have good travelling, but again a swing of the mountain wall would force us down on to the floor of the valley, where we would be hours making a single mile. Each step of a horse would plunge him a foot deep in the soft clinging clay and muck that made every foot of advance a fearful effort. Every time a hoof was drawn out of the slime there would be a pop like the drawing of a cork, as the suction of the mess relinquished the little feet of the horses. To get back on higher ground meant the laborious cutting of a trail through fallen and matted timber, with delays of half an hour at a time to cut through a hundred feet of way. When the signal came back down the long line to start the horses again, it would usually develop that one or two that had been standing in wet places had sunk so deep that it would take a couple of men ten minutes to get them out. Then we would advance for half a mile perhaps, only to be forced back to the river's muck, and have it all to do over again.

As we pushed down the valley, the river would strike from one side to the other, making it necessary to cross and re-cross at least half a dozen times during a single drive, and each crossing brought on a problem to be solved on its own merits. Occasionally the river would be running in half a dozen channels

Pack-horses picking their way over a bad bit of going.

and the horses could get across without going above their knees, while again the stream would be deep, and, half-way across, we would either have to turn back or swim the animals and soak our supplies. As we pushed on, the weather turned colder and the stream fell rapidly, and had it not been for this lucky turn in the temperature, we could not have crossed at all in many places. After the cold snap came a rainy spell, which meant snow on the summits and a general freezing up of the sources of the streams, which again helped to reduce the torrents which the sun had raised intermittently to block our progress.

Ordinarily one dislikes very much to start out on a long day in a drizzling rain, but we feared that any day might bring sunshine and the return of high water, and we were only too glad to keep moving in the wet, though the discomfort was certainly hideous. The first minute that the pack-train plunged into the brush, every one was wet through, each tree or overhanging bough releasing a regular cloudburst of raindrops on to man and beast, and in less than an hour our hands and feet were numbed with the cold. To dismount meant to plunge knee-deep in mud, and to remain in the saddle spelled a chilling cold, which crept through into the very marrow of the bones.

It is always on this kind of days that endless

An ideal camp on the Athabasca River.

trouble arises, involving long delays on the trail. A dozen times a day, as we followed down the bank of the river, one of the horses would blunder off into the water and start to swim to the other side, whereupon the others would follow suit, and in two minutes a dozen horses would be splashing and floundering in the water, which meant that the man nearest them must send his own mount plunging into the icy water (sometimes necessitating swimming), to get the perverse beasts back into the line, only to have them repeat the blunder within the next mile. When the day's drive of six or eight hours had brought us to a camping place, every one was wet, half frozen and disgusted, but, as I have said before, the troubles of the day are forgotten the moment unpacking commences. In ten minutes the tents have been put up, with front flaps thrown wide open and big fires burning within six feet of their yawning mouths, while the heat sends columns of steam from the saturated canvas. In half an hour more, all is as dry as in a house, and beds are laid under the canvas, books are dragged out of packs, and the balance of the day passes with the ease and comfort which, it often seems to me, no civilization can ever quite equal. My mind turns back to scores and scores of just such camps, after just such dismal days, and they all stand out as the last touch of supreme comfort and homeliness.

But as we worked down the valley other and larger streams came in—the main Athabasca from the west, a half-dozen nameless streams from the east, and still later the big obstreperous Whirlpool from the British Columbia summit. Our route finally settled down on the eastern bank of the river ; for, crossing with the outfit, save by raft and swimming, had become impossible. And yet, with all its difficulties and discomforts, I loved this trail, for nearly every night saw us camped in some ideal grove beside the bank of the river, where it was now a silent, deep-flowing stream, lapping by within a few feet of our tents, which we were wont to pitch facing the river, so we could sit of the quiet nights and see the great expanse of velvet black water slipping busily by under the faint light of the stars. Then, gathered about our camp-fire, we would sit late into the night, talking of the game, the trail, philosophy, history, religion, and in fact of any and every subject that the mind could think of.

The idea many people have that these trappers lead a desolate life, uninterested in anything but their surroundings, is the greatest fiction imaginable, for I have heard more serious talk on a wider range of subjects, sitting around camp-fires with old cow-punchers, canoemen and trappers, than I have heard in dozens of gilded drawing-rooms, where idle gossip and small talk serves to pass the hours. Not that

these men are educated; many of them have never had the opportunity, but often on the pathway through the forest have I heard Fred arguing with some rugged "Old Timer" about Darwin, the origin of species, international politics, and a thousand other themes. Again, it would be nature, the trees and the beasts that he would talk about. Here Fred would be at his best, and hour after hour he reeled off in his quaint language tales and experiences encountered with every creature that roams these wilds, from the grizzly bear to the beaver, and from the ants and grubs up to the moose and caribou.

It is a liberal education to live, day in and day out, with men whose minds are not tortured with ideas of money, notes to meet, credits good or fortunes ruined. As Fred would say, "Life is too short to worry about money. If I lose all I have to-morrow, I can get a couple of bear traps and by next spring I'll be on my feet again. The mountains are always here, and I know where there's a bunch of bear and a colony of beaver, and I can get along out here and live like a prince, while Morgan, Rockefeller, and these other poor millionaires are lying awake nights, lest some one come and steal their money."

At last, after nearly two weeks, we rounded a point of rock, and ahead of us across the valley we saw a deep cleft, which seemed to cut at right angles across the Rockies. So sharp and deep was the

Waterfalls in the Athabasca Valley. 50,000 horse-power going to waste.

defile that it looked as though some giant hand, with two blows of an axe, had cut a wedge straight out of the ranges, from their summit to the valley's bottom. Before us were mountains and beyond us more mountains, and on all sides were jumbled masses of snow-capped peaks and narrow valleys, but here alone was a broad deep defile. I rode my horse out of the trail on to a little eminence and looked down and across the great river that flowed at our feet, and then at this wonderful cross-cut in the mountains that I had seen in my mind's eye for years—the Yellowhead Pass, the route of the Grand Trunk Pacific on its way from the prairies to the Pacific; and, though it seemed but a stone's throw to the highway into British Columbia, we were still some days of hard travel from where we camped, opposite the entrance to it, on the wrong side of the river at that. At this point, from where I could just see the pass, we camped for a day, as I was anxious to make a closer inspection of the great falls of the Athabasca River, which were only a mile or two from the spot where we went into camp.

The falls on western rivers are certainly astonishing, for in the space of a mile or two, the change that takes place in the character of a stream is a regular Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde transformation. For miles above the falls, the river had been a great slow-flowing lake, moving in peaceful serenity, with a

calmness and dignity that gave out scarcely a ripple along the shores. In many places it was 150 yards across, with the still surface that spells great depth. Just above the falls, the trail swings back upon a mountain bench, and it was here that we camped, while I took the young engineer and the cook to make a rough survey of the great power which we could hear roaring, though it was more than a mile through the bush to its edge. It was well worth the effort, and I was glad I had camped ; for, as far as I know, not above a dozen white men had ever seen it at that time.

The river, peaceful and quiet as some great inland waterway, comes flowing around a curve at a width well on to 200 yards, and then suddenly the banks close in and the whole volume of water seems to leap suddenly forward over a ledge less than one-third that width, and fall into a chasm some 80 feet deep. The walls close in abruptly from both sides and the vast tumult of water goes surging through a gorge so narrow that a man could easily leap across from wall to wall. Far down in the depths is the white froth and resonant roaring of this vast stream, which is congested into such meagre space that it seems as though the walls of stone could not withstand the fury with which it lashes at the rocky barriers that enclose it. A hundred feet above it, the noise and thunder created

down in the depths are so great that only by shouting can one make his voice heard a foot away.

While the engineer was running lines, and doing those odds and ends of mathematics necessary on such occasions, I crawled here and there among the rocks, photographing the raging torrent in as many different aspects as I could obtain of it from different approaches. Here, as we found late that night when our intelligent Sawyer had made endless columns of figures and computations by the light of the campfire, was 50,000 horse-power running to waste. Fred scoffed at water-powers. What he wanted was beaver skins, or the hide of a full-grown grizzly, or even a gold claim, but water-powers were of no use or interest to him, yet I could not help thinking to myself many and many a time during the next months of what some future decade might see at the brink of this now wild and desolate place. Brick buildings, giant turbines and great dynamos harnessed to this power that had never yet felt the restraint of man, was my vision. I could see the vast surging, roaring tumult lulled forever, with its current drawn off in great mains to be converted into electric current that may yet be used for purposes of light, heat and power a hundred miles away. One cannot travel through the wilderness without feeling on every hand the vast latent treasures that are either going utterly to waste or else held

A couple of views of the Athabasca Falls.

The upper one shows the volume of water, while the lower is the outlet of the gorge a quarter of a mile below, where the whole stream is but a few feet wide, but of limitless depth.

petrified within the hearts of these great mountains that loom above us on every side.

A few days later our pack-train filed out of the brush, and went into camp on the banks of the Athabasca once more, this time swollen by the junction of the Whirlpool and the Miette, the former coming in just below the big falls and the latter pouring its limpid waters out of the mouth of the pass itself.

Ah, you readers, who move through the mountains on your trains *de luxe*, can have but little realization what these rivers mean before the steel bridges are in and the way made easy for you. Puff, roar, bang!—and your train has passed over a torrent that the poor pioneer and trapper, in order to cross, has had to take his life in his hand, and perhaps be delayed several days in building a raft or fashioning a crude dug-out from a log. But all who have crossed the mountains, before the way was made easy by the armies of construction and the steel gang, will recall the scores of times that your pack-train has pulled out of the brush and on to the bank of just such a torrent as this old Athabasca, 200 yards wide and running like a mill-race. You will recall also your packers riding out on the beach and discussing the prospects of getting over.

So it was with us on this July day, as we unpacked on the river bank, glancing every now and then at

the distant bank (I assure you it looked a mile away), and wondering just how much of a trick it would be to get over. After a little inspection, we decided to build a raft and swim the horses; but, first of all, it seemed best to delay everything for a couple of days on account of the horses. Those two bad days in the pass and the long hard drag down the muddy trail of the Athabasca had pulled the pack-train down beyond credence. Two horses were running light, and many of the others were thin and haggard. "Now, old Sorrel," remarked Fred, as we sat around the pack-cover at dinner, "he's sure gotten skinnier'n h—— these last few days, and I don't think the old devil's got the ginger under his hide to cut the mustard, when it comes to swimmin' this young flood which you fellers see a-bilin' past. The little Bay now, he's some peaked too since he fell down the mountain and skinned his knees. He ain't a bad horse, the Bay ain't, and I don't want to see him get his'n in this rampagin' river. And then there's the old White—he's just barely been draggin' his hinders over the trail this past week, and besides, Nick's saddle-horse has been gettin' down in the dumps worse and worse every day for a month. Now, fellers, if we was to tackle the job this minute, a lot o' them critturs would just naturally turn up their toes to the surface and drift off down the river to the Arctic Ocean."

And Fred was undoubtedly right, for they were a tired-looking bunch of pack-horses and no mistake; and, if there had been any one but Fred watching over them night and day those last weeks, like so many babies, there wouldn't have been a fit one in the outfit, for we had been through a pretty hard bit of country, even for western broncs. Each night Fred would look them over with the most minute care, greasing one here, rubbing salve on another, and bandaging a cut or bruised leg on a third. There never was a better man to horses than this same Fred, nor one who could go through hell with a pack-train and bring them back in fair condition in the fall. But what he said about the horses was our law, for he knew just what a horse could do and stand better than any one I have ever met.

The next morning, we threw together a small "range-finder" raft (if I may use that term), which consisted of five short poles, each about ten feet long. On this, Fred and I crossed the river, making a very satisfactory landing on the opposite side, just at a place where a great point of rock comes down to within fifty feet of the river. We moored our raft in the brush and climbed up the bank, and almost the first thing I stumbled upon in the brush was a long white stake, on which was written in blue keel "2189 GTP Fill 10 feet," or whatever it was, I forget

exactly. It was one of the survey grade stakes of the new road to the Pacific. Not another sign of civilization in the dense underbrush was there but this, but to me it spelled the first isolated microbe of activity that would soon set these mountains ringing with the blast of powder, and the shouts of men, tearing the iron trail through this primitive silence, for the steel head was still nearly three hundred miles away.

We had crossed the river primarily because, five miles below us on the river, there lived an old mountaineer, named Lewis Swift, who for twenty years had reigned the monarch of the lonely mountain empire. Swift's place was on the proposed route of the new line, and we both figured that with the railroad coming soon, there would certainly be occasional pack-trains or engineering parties coming in from Edmonton. We had been fifty odd days on the way, and I felt sure that Swift must have recent news from the outer world and, perhaps, mail for me ; and, being unwilling to wait several days for the completion of a big raft, and the crossing of our whole outfit, I had persuaded Fred to make this trip. Two minutes after we had been pushing through the bush, we came out on a small narrow ribbon of dust among the trees which for nearly a century had been the path of the occasional lonely trapper or wandering Indian bringing out his

winter's catch of fur to the world's market, the Hudson Bay Company, at Edmonton.

I am going to reserve Swift and his place for another chapter, for he is entitled to a book all by himself. Suffice it to say, there was no mail. "Well," I asked, "you probably have some late news from the States," for I was anxious to know what had become of the Tariff Bill in the extra session of Congress, then sizzling in the heat at Washington.

"Well, yes, I reckon I have got some news all right," Swift replied reflectively.

"Recent news?" I asked eagerly.

"Well, pretty recent, I should say," was the reply.

"Good," I thought to myself, "that means about a month old;" and then I said aloud, "What's the latest from the States and Washington?"

For a long time old Swift ruminated, silently whittling a small piece of stick. At last he replied, "Well, did you hear that Taft was elected?"

And here it was the 25th of July.

"Is that the last you've heard?" I asked in wonder.

The old man looked much disappointed. "Well, I reckon it is," he said. "What's the matter with that; it only happened last fall, and there ain't been nobody through here since." For the first time I realized that the grade stakes did not necessarily mean immediate civilization.

That night Fred and I were back in our camp on the other side of the Athabasca, and the next days were spent in building a splendid big raft, which was to cross the whole outfit and the personnel of the party. It was a splendid job, and when completed and launched it floated in the water as

We pitch our tent on the very brink of the river.

steady as a battleship, at least so it looked to me in comparison with our first little contrivance of poles. When camp was struck and the grub-pile and outfit lashed in place, we all suspended work for the task of swimming the horses across the river.

Just above the raft was a small clearing, with a little beach running out a few feet to the water's

edge and a shallow bar extending perhaps fifty feet more into the river. We rounded up the horses on the beach, felling trees right and left around the place, so that they could not turn off into the timber; and then, with sticks and yells, we drove the bunch into the water, the first ones hesitating to take the water, until the rear ones shoved them in. With old sagacious Pinto in the lead, they finally waded out to the end of the bar, when the old horse stopped and looked inquiringly around to see if he was to be encouraged in his enterprise, but a shower of sticks and stones and a tumult of yells seemed to reassure him, and without more ado he stepped off into the current and plunged completely out of sight. When he arose to the surface, only his nose and ears were sticking out of the water, while his tail drifted out behind with the current. One after the other, the balance of the animals took the river, each snorting the water out of his nostrils as he sunk below his depth. Without exaggeration one could hear the snorts of the twenty odd beasts for half a mile.

It was interesting to watch them too, for once in the stream, their instincts served them better than any guidance. Each horse turned directly up stream, half facing the other shore, and dug out for all that was in him. The current, striking them obliquely, carried them across, just as one of the old-time ferry boats is taken over a river. It was a good test of

How the pack-train crossed the Athabasca River.

their strength and vitality. After the first minute, the line began to string out down the river. "By h——, that old Sorrel is sure goin' to quit," exclaimed Fred, "and your saddle-horse, the shiftless devil, he'll sure drown too if he don't get a move on." For these two horses were sliding downstream at an alarming rate. At last, the old Pinto caught bottom and slowly dragged himself out on an opposite bar, where he stood basking in the sunshine. One by one, the others followed him, until all but two were landed. For several minutes it looked as if they would not make it. But they did, and crawled weakly out into the brush a mile downstream, and then came neighing up the trail to join their pals.

As soon as they were safely over, Fred and Nick boarded the big raft. "She'd go a whole lot easier without you fellers," said Fred. "Do you think you three could make it on the little raft?"

I asked Tom and Sawyer what they thought. They both said, "Sure, we could swim across if necessary."

So we let the big raft loose and shoved it off, and then watched Fred and Nick work like demons to keep their place in the stream and let the current carry them over, just as it had the horses. They were both husky men, and in five minutes they made an eddy on the other side and dragged the raft up a little slough, when they disappeared from our sight.

Then we got on our little raft and cast off. The moment we were adrift, I cursed the folly of our not having tried it out before, for the whole affair was a couple of inches under water with our combined weight. I stationed Tom in the middle and

Crossing the Athabasca on a raft in July, 1909.

The grades of two trans-continental railroads now cut across the bluff in the background. When this picture was taken the nearest town was distant almost 300 miles

Sawyer in the front, each with a paddle, and yelled at them to "go to it." The moment we struck the current, the swift-flowing water got under one side and the raft tipped up to an angle of 45°, throwing both the boys down. Their weight on the high side

righted it in the water. In the meantime, the banks were sliding past at about eight miles an hour. Both of the boys got excited, and for every dip of the paddle, I got a gallon of cold water back over the rear end of the raft ; first from Tom and then from Sawyer, each of whom were "catching crabs" so rapidly that I stood in a steady sheet of spray and water.

When we got out into the centre of the river, they got to quarrelling and abusing each other, so that our craft simply turned around and around in the swift current. At last, when it looked to me as though we might end up at the mouth of the McKenzie, we struck a cross-current and drifted toward the side for which we were aiming, where the river raced close under a cut bank and the floods of the last week had carried away the earth and undermined great trees, so that they had finally collapsed into the water, their great trunks extending forty feet into the stream and bobbing up and down with the current.

These are called "sweepers" and I surely despise them.

I had no more than spotted this new menace, when crash ! bang ! we were under it. I saw a vision of red hair coming my way, and the next second the raft went out from under my feet, and I found myself hanging on to the trunk of a tree, which every second was plunging me up and down in the icy water

as an irate mother would duck a naughty child. The slippery bark gave but a poor finger hold and the stream sucked and dragged around my body as though it had a thousand hands and each was pulling me down. I was lying on my back, looking up into the tree. By releasing one hand and drifting under the log, I caught it from the other side, which left me facing the current. I tried to pull myself up, but the current was too strong for my finger hold. Finally I managed to reach an old dead limb.

I never gave so much thought to a dead limb since I can remember.

I tested it, but it creaked and cracked ominously. I decided to drop off and swim for it, but at that instant my legs, which had become numb, drew up beneath me in an acute cramp. One thinks quite a lot in a short time on these occasions. I did—mostly about that dead limb. "Nice limb," I thought, "good, kind limb, please don't break," and then I began to pull. For a moment I thought, whether the limb held or not, I couldn't exert the strength to haul myself out of the current and up on to the trunk. I cast a glance down the river, but the raft and Tom were out of sight. Plaintive yippings from the end of the tree told me that Sawyer had not yet solved the mathematical problem which was confronting him. There seemed to be no hope but in my arms, as my legs, clad in great knee boots, had become like ice. I knew that in all probability

I had a pair of perfectly good legs somewhere under that tree, but all communication between them and the rest of my body had been interrupted.

There is nothing like being up against it to produce results. Inch by inch I pulled myself up by that limb, which emitted that ominous crack, crack, crack. I could see it bend, bend, bend, and a great white slit appeared in it. Gee! I felt worried. But it held, and in a moment I was on the log and had Sawyer by the hand and he was out too. We crawled ashore and sat down in the sunshine. I think our engineer ceased being a tender-foot about then, for all he said was, "I think I am certainly a —— —— fool;" and though he was shivering all over he smiled a little. It helps a lot to see one smile, and I liked him a whole lot better after that.

Tom landed the raft in an eddy below us, and together we took it apart to get the ropes, and then went up the river to where Fred and Nick were making camp. I think Tom and Sawyer expected sympathy, but I did not. All Fred said was, "Well, I'll bet you fellers have all been in the river." Then he grinned and added to Nick, "Gee, but they're a green bunch. Didn't expect much of Tom and Sawyer, but what do you think of a feller that's been in the mountains five years, and then don't know no better than to fall off a raft." I felt very much ashamed; but still, I was very glad indeed that the limb held.

CHAPTER XII

Which includes a Brief Account of the Life and Character of Swift, of the Yellowhead Pass

THE next day started badly. When we tried to round up the horses in the morning, they split up into two groups. The first, headed by old Pinto, waded off on a sandbar and then, when we went after them, swam out on to an island about a third of the way across the Athabasca, and remained there in perverse complacency, refusing to be lured back again. There was not a spear of grass on the island they had chosen, which was a desolate and sandy spot and so small that they all stood huddled in a bunch, interestedly watching our indignation at their enterprise. As there was swimming water between them and the mainland, we had to build a small raft, large enough for one man to cross over on and drive them off. They waited patiently, with ears pricked forward, and with evident curiosity to see what we were going to do about it, in a way that just made us scream with annoyance. When Fred landed on one end of the island, they evacuated the other, returning to the mainland and then strolled

off down the trail and into the corral we had made for them. By this time every one was peevish. The second group was rounded up two miles away, but one horse was still missing. A counting of noses showed that my saddle-horse was the guilty absentee. Now, I have not mentioned this animal before, but ere he disappears for ever from these pages, I must say that he was the most obstinate, exasperating, lazy beast that I ever had on my staff. At the slightest excuse he would fall down. The first time he did it I was genuinely alarmed, for he lay on his side with his long neck stretched out and eyes half closed, and groaned piteously, his lower lip wobbling tremulously. My heart bled for him, for I thought nothing less than a broken leg could be responsible for such a pathetic spectacle. I was riding in the rear of the pack-train and my gentle efforts to get him up were of no avail. I finally got the cook back to my assistance, but our combined efforts served only to bring forth more sighs and lamentations from the unhappy beast. He would raise his head, groan heavily, and let it fall back with a sigh, as though to say, " It's no use, boys ; leave me to my fate."

While we were contemplating what to do next, Fred came back to investigate the delay. He took one look at the horse and then stepped off into the brush and pulled up a small dead tree. The black

horse raised his head, craning it back over his shoulder to see what was going on, and when he saw the tree come up by the roots, he gave one leap and made off at a gallop through the timber so that it took ten minutes to catch him. Again and again this happened, until I lost all patience. A six-inch log, a clump of moss, or the most trifling inequality in the trail would bring him down on his knees with a heart-rending groan. Nick, who usually rode behind me, despised this horse, and the moment he fell down, he would come charging up on his own big black animal, shouting "Wait 'till I get at 'im," but the moment he came in sight, the black horse would be on his feet in one jump.

On this particular morning he was missing, and when his name was mentioned, every one swore softly, for he was no favourite in our camp. For two hours every member of the outfit searched far and wide for the animal. The ground was so trampled by the rest of the horses that it was all but impossible to track him. About noon, as Fred was coming in from a fruitless search of five or six miles, he heard a slight rustle in the brush only a hundred yards from our camp. On reaching the spot, there was the black horse, cunningly cached in the heavy underbrush, not ten feet from the trail, where he had been standing for hours, no doubt keenly enjoying the sight of the whole party hunting up and down the

trail for him. The moment Fred saw him, and he realized he was discovered, he started for camp on a dead gallop, followed by a blue haze of comments.

And then a strange thing happened. The horse, anticipating that there might be something coming his way, ran full tilt down the trail, with his head leering back to see how far away Fred was. The way was the smoothest since we had left the railroad, but the stupid idiot never even looked in his path, with the result that he stubbed one of his hind feet on a pebble no bigger than an apple and in some inexplicable way snapped it short off so that the bone stuck out two inches through the skin. Well, of course we were all sorry when Fred shot him, but there was really no other way out of it. So that was the second unpleasant episode of the day.

In talking over the condition of the horses, it was decided to pull on down the river to Swift's place and camp there for a few days and then reorganize the whole outfit, leaving what horses and equipment we could spare and start afresh for the trip through the pass and down the Fraser. We packed up, and late that afternoon filed into Swift's and went into camp in a lovely little poplar grove, on the outskirts of the ranch or farm which the old man had located in the wilderness.

And now I must pause long enough to touch upon Swift, for he is certainly a unique character,

and one who for twenty years has been an institution in the Yellowhead country. His name is known and respected by every trapper, pioneer and prospector who has threaded the wilderness within a thousand miles of this humble abode, which is situated on the Athabasca, just below the entrance to the great pass. Here in brief is his history :—

In the early seventies the call of the wild and the glamour of the opening West had percolated as far East as Buffalo, where there was an enterprising youngster selling lightning rods to that portion of the population which had fallen a victim to that habit which swept the United States at about that time. With the waning of the lightning rod business came the call of the West, and Swift, abandoning his profession, drifted out into the Black Hills, then in the throes of the Gold Fever, and in a few years he had made a reputation for himself as a daring driver of the stage line that ran from Bismarck, North Dakota, to Deadwood. Adventures up and down the road with masked men and occasional prospecting trips looked a whole lot better to Swift than the lightning rod business, and so he never returned East again from that day to this, but drifted with the vanguard that rolls ahead of civilization's advance.

In the early nineties he made stake in southern British Columbia, and with his proceeds from the

claim, he bought himself a pack outfit, and early in '91 hit out for the head of the Fraser River, for, as ever, it is the most distant and inaccessible country that has the reputation of being an undiscovered Eldorado. With twelve horses, Swift set out alone from Kamloops, up the North Thompson River, and over a trail which even to-day is the last word in roughness and which at that time was all but impassable. But Swift was no "quitter," and after nearly three months of hewing his way, building rafts, and swimming rivers, with the loss of three of his horses and much of his grub, he pulled into the flat in the mountains that lies at the junction of the McClernan and the Fraser Rivers, and just at the western end of the Yellowhead Pass.

This is the head of the Fraser for canoe transportation, and for a century has been known in the history of the trail as the Tête Jaune Cache, or as the boys call it, the "T John Cache." The derivation of this name, which is stamped on pass, lake and cache, is said to be from the fact that more than a century ago, a certain flaxen-haired trapper, known as Jasper Hawes, trading with the Hudson Bay Company's outpost at the Henry House (now only an abandoned ruin on the river, near Swift's ranch), was wont to travel this country each year. He was known on the trail by the nickname of the Yellowhead, or Tête Jaune, as translated into the French

by the early missionaries. The pass which he travelled was dubbed the "Yellowhead Pass," and the point where he used to make his cache for longer trips down the river became known as the Tête Jaune Cache, and under this name the whole beautiful flat, where the mountains break away and the two rivers join, has drifted down in mountain history to steal at last into the maps and atlases that have appeared for the last thirty years.

It was here that, bedraggled and forlorn, old Swift and his surviving horses arrived in August of 1891, and it was at this spot where he fell in with several tepee's of Indians, come for the fall run of salmon. "Never again," he told the Indians, would he cover the Kamloops trail. The Indians advised him to make through the pass, and that he would find it easy going to Edmonton, some 350 miles by trail. So, after a brief rest, he started on through the pass, but the going was slow, and it was well into September when he emerged at the west end and came out on the banks of the swiftly flowing Athabasca. For a few miles, he travelled down the benches that lay above the river, and at last came out in a veritable park of several hundred acres, where he made his camp for the night in a grove of fir and spruce. Here he rested for a day, and another, and another, and to make a long story short, he has been there ever since, though, of course, he has been to

Edmonton from time to time to trade his furs for supplies.

The next year he built himself a little cabin and from time to time added a shed and a stable, until finally his place was pretty well equipped. But the most remarkable thing of all was the small horse-power that he established the first year he came into that country. He told me about it one night, as we sat about the camp-fire, for he used to come and sit with us every evening when we passed that way. "When I was a-draggin' into the country all them years ago," he said, "I had quite a lot of useful odds and ends, and among my contraptions was a small six-inch grindstone. Now, you fellers know what a devil of a job it is to sharpen an axe with a file, and how frequent-like one has to do it, when you're a-buildin' of a shack. Well, about the first week I was at work on this here house, it just occurred to me that I'd sure make a water wheel to turn my grindstone. So's quick as I got around to it, I made this little dam, cut out the timber and patched 'er all up, and it was some job when you take it into consideration that there ain't a nail in the whole thing."

"Well," we asked, "how did she work, Swift?"

"She worked fine," he replied reminiscently, "for two days, and then the pesky wheel broke and it looked like my work was thrown away. But

it wa'nt in the long run, for the next year, when I was down to Peter Gunn's place, in Lake St. Anne, I see a fine little coffee grinder that I figured would go first-class on a horse, so I packed it out here and set it to work. I never did go in for coffee, likin' tea much better, but I calculated I'd better use coffee, as bein' so handy to grind it in my mill, and that was why I've used it ever since. Later, I got a bigger one to grind wheat, and she can squeeze about three bushel a day when I keep her a-goin' steady." And, on fine days in the fall, old Swift would sit upon a stump beside his mill with a big tablespoon, dropping a few grains at a time. Here he lived year after year, trapping a little, trading with the Indians, and waiting for something to turn up, and in all these years, there was never a poor bedraggled trapper or prospector, red or white, that was ever turned away from Swift's with an empty stomach. If an unfortunate lost his outfit in the rivers, it was always, "If we can get to Swift's place, he'll fix us out."

Nearly two decades passed, and one day the engineers came along, looking for the location of the Grand Trunk Pacific, and after that, during the summers, Swift had lots of company, and was made official store-keeper for the survey parties. At last came the location; and, when all was said and done, one of the bench marks of the survey was in

the corner of the old man's store house, while the right-of-way passed within six inches of his door. Everybody that came that way had to have a look at the tack in the roof, "Which is sure a good sign that she's a-comin' this way some time," as old Swift would tell us.

I have spent many a day in the mountains, but I believe the days I've camped at Swift's are among the pleasantest of all. Around it, on all sides, are mountains, and directly before his little ranch flows the noble Athabasca. To the south are the giant snow-caps of the upper Athabasca, from which we had been threading our way, while directly behind his house, a great black wall rose 1,000 feet above the flat. Through his place there leaps and bubbles a brook, clear as crystal, while on the hottest day there is shade and a bit of breeze beneath the giant firs and spruce. Standing before his place, it is as impossible to guess how the rail is to come in, and how the Athabasca itself gets out of the mountain wall, as it is to plot the outlet to one of the Norwegian fjords, and that is the most difficult thing I know. But old Swift pointed out, away to the north, a great elbow around which he said the river swung, just before it left for ever the Rockies that have parented it.

Swift was married and had four children; and, as other babies played with toys, his little ones

played with traps. Shy and wild at first like little animals, they dodged about in the brush until they became satisfied that we were friends. Every night old Swift would come strolling down to our camp with a few potatoes, an egg or two, or some other delicacy that he well knew we had not tasted in months. In the mornings, I would sit with him

Breaking a wild horse at Swift's for use in the pack-train.

under the shadow of his porch and listen while he narrated tale after tale of his doings in the Black Hills and of the early days in the West. He always came with a stick in his hand, and the moment he sat down out would come his great jack-knife, and as the long white slivers began to gather around his feet, he would begin his talk, which

would run as long as the audience lasted. And so, like dozens of others that have passed this way, I came to know and love this old hermit of the Yellowhead Pass.

CHAPTER XIII

Which deals with the Yellowhead Pass

IT was six days later, when, with lightened packs and short two horses (left at Swift's place to recuperate), we were packed up once more and on the trail, headed south from our little poplar camp for the long pull to the Tête Jaune Cache that lies eighty miles westward through the Yellowhead Pass and on the other side of the divide. We had an appointment there with two prospectors, Bill and Mort Teare, who had located certain mineral deposits that we wanted to have a look at for ourselves. The trail from Swift's, like the survey itself, runs close into the mountains for the first few miles, winding over a bench which is as flat as a table and perhaps a mile wide. Poplar groves and dense brush crowd close to the trail, while the whole flat is sown with thousands upon thousands of Saskatoon bushes, which in the early fall bear a berry somewhat larger than a currant, but infinitely more delicious.

Whenever the trail in the mountains leads through a thick brush country, it is always well defined and easy to travel, for then the horses are squeezed

into single file, and each treads in the footsteps of his predecessor, making a narrow ribbon that is sometimes worn six inches deep. About three miles above Swift's is the old site of the Hudson's Bay Henry House, one of the oldest of its trading posts, abandoned nearly a century ago. Here the river swings in toward the mountains, and the trail goes down into the bottom, threading its way among trees, and every three miles crossing little brooklets that come leaping and tumbling down from the mountain-sides, their joyous tumult singing of the Spring time and glacier snows released by the warm rays of the summer sun.

Where the trail descends into the bottom, the survey swings in close to the mountains, where later giant-powder and dynamite will tear the roadbed for the steel out of the very side of the rocky wall, for the iron way cannot run up and down hill like a pack-trail, and already the steel is aiming for the gentle climb to the Continental Divide, twenty miles west on the summit of the Yellowhead Pass. Shoulders of mountains must be torn away, trestles erected, and long stretches filled, that the steel may march along its billiard table grade to the very crest of the mountains. Here, for a thousand miles eastward, the surveyors have staked the path, by dint of puzzles solved by midnight camp-fires in the past five years, so that by turning aside from

Pack-horse picking his way over a mean bit in the Yellowhead trail.

no obstacle that nature may interpose, it may digest the rise in altitude mile for mile. The result is that in no single stretch, between the mile stones, is there an ascent exceeding more than 21·12 feet to the mile ; or, as the engineer says, " a four-tenths per cent. grade." To one walking over the finished grade, this is so small a rise that it is practically imperceptible, and means in the days to come that a single locomotive can drag from fifty to sixty cars, loaded with the prairies' produce and wealth, from Edmonton to the Pacific, with the same speed and ease that it does over the flat plains from Winnipeg to the mountains.

In the old days of railroading, the cry was " anything to get through." To wend over the forbidding passes of the Rockies, even with a pack-train, was an achievement in bygone years, and when it was demonstrated that the traffic of a continent might be taken by rail over the great obstacle of the mountain barrier, and the East and West linked together by the steel band, the world wondered and rejoiced. Any grade that a locomotive could pull a car up was seized by the early builders with shouts of delight. When the C.P.R. went through Canada in the late eighties, laying its right-of-way literally over the peaks of the mountains, all Canada celebrated and heralded the achievement as a wonder of the world, which indeed it was. The threading of their

Showing the "Diamond Hitch."

beautiful Kicking Horse Pass was a difficult problem and necessitated crossing the Continental Divide at an altitude of 5,321 feet. The altitude in itself was not so great, but the problem the engineer had to face was to get his line down into the valley on the other side, with a grade that cars could be moved over, and the best that could be done at that time was 116 feet to the mile, or more than five times that of the new Grand Trunk Pacific's crossing. This meant that to take a dozen loaded freight cars up the hill, three giant locomotives must be employed and in doing so they nearly had apoplexy.

Year after year the largest engines that were known to the builders went snorting up these grades, coughing great chunks of coal up their stacks, while the firemen laboured like stokers on an ocean liner to keep up a head of steam that would take them at a snail's pace up the shelf along the mountain side, which was blown out by the dynamite of the construction gang. This meant additional engines, double and triple train crews, vast loss of time and the limitless expenditure of coal, all of which, combined, spell cost of operation, which is anything but economical. The wonderful achievements of the engineers make the tourists rave with delight, but the cost of transfer of freight across these passes makes the shippers groan with despair when the bills are presented. But even the C.P.R. could not stand

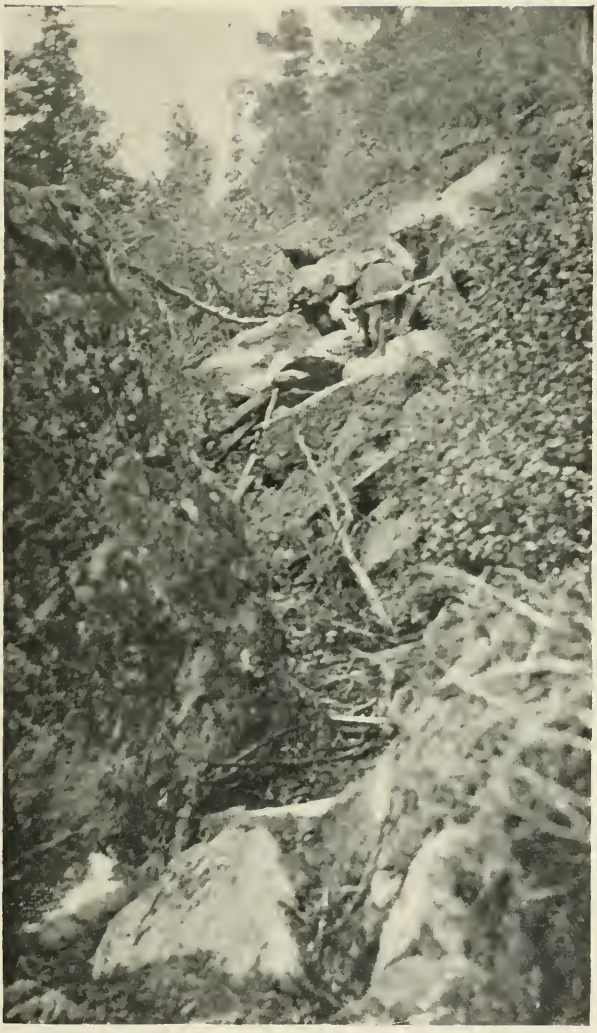
the Kicking Horse experiment in the long run, and it is only within the past few years that they have cut their grade in two by spending millions of dollars on great spiral tunnels and gigantic loops back and forth to the valley's head; even this cut leaves them three times the gradient that the Yellowhead Pass affords.

But this was only the beginning on the Pioneer Trans-continental Line in Canada, for scarcely has the train gotten down into the valley, before nature has thrown another barrier across the way to be traversed, and again the giant helper locomotives, ahead and astern, are called upon to shove, pull and boost the traffic up over the Selkirks summit, at Roger's Pass, with its altitude of 4,351 feet. Here again the imagination of the surveyor has been called upon to meet with his construction the rapid drop to the valley on the Pacific side; and, as one stands on the rear of the observation car, taking it all in, the most grudging cannot but applaud the genius of the man who, many years ago, sat in his tent among these lonely glaciers and roaring torrents with their howling canyons, and in his mind's eye laid out these festoons of steel, thrown like the loops of a lariat from side to side of the narrow valley.

It is wonderful, and the beauties of it bring the oversea tourists out in shoals and schools, but from the modern idea, it is not railroading that pays, nor

can it stand the competition of a twentieth-century line that is said to have investigated forty passes and poured out money like water, before the chaff was winnowed from the grain, leaving the single golden kernel in the route via the Yellowhead Pass, whose summit is 3,720 feet, and whose grade, as plotted by the engineers, is 26 feet to the mile westbound, and 21 feet going east. And not only is there but this small grade, but the mountains of the Rockies are crossed once and for all over this single summit, while the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, Union Pacific and even the new Chicago, Milwaukee & Puget Sound each have three heights of land to crawl over, the first three of which have a maximum grade both ways in excess of 100 feet to the mile, while the last mentioned has 89 feet going west, and 105 feet coming toward the Atlantic.

I had read all these things long before I had ever left the railroad, and day after day, as I rode along in the sunshine, I studied the complicated tumult of heaped-up mountains and glaciers, and wondered at the miracle which could have broken down the barriers in a pass devised by nature for the uses of man. It almost seems as though Providence had withheld this last, best gift of her bounty to hand to Canada in the eleventh hour of her development, affording her a cheap highway and a world market for all of the potential produce of her inland empire.



A stretch in the pathway through the Yellowhead that is responsible for volumes of profanity.

Nowadays the rise and fall of continents depends upon the outlet for their trade. The farmer in the interior may have wealth of grain and produce beyond the dreams of agricultural avarice, but if he has to see half its value consumed in cost of delivering it to the consumer, his dream of profits from his labour and industry is but a transitory one. However, with an outlet where he can see his harvests and the fruit of his labour and summer's activity coasting in sixty carload trains at 30 miles an hour to the highways of the world, he beholds every acre that can bear a bushel of grain or feed his stock leap in value, for it means to him that the money which has heretofore been going for coal, train crews, and interest on millions spent in mountain engineering, is now to go into his own pocket. Nay, more, it means that a hundred ports in the world market that heretofore have never known his wares will now be the ultimate destination for the wheat that he pours into the elevators on the prairie side-track in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In a word, it means that in the future an inland empire will be dotted with farms, where before, from century to century, the wind has swept across the barren vastnesses of the empty prairies, and all of this because a little quiet gentleman in far-off Montreal had a vision, and the energy behind it to make his dream a reality.

While Canada howled with impatience at the years

that slipped away, while the surveyors were climbing among the rocks and shooting the rapids of the western rivers in their search, these men in Montreal and their staff of engineers were weighing and re-weighing the merits of each new potential route that the surveyors brought in from the wilderness. The Pine, the Peace and the Wahpiti Passes all passed in procession before the cool calculating eye of the "man behind," that inimitable genius Charles M. Hays, and each for a time seemed to press close for the honour; but this was to be a road built for all time, and the elapsing years and the expenditure of millions will prove a good investment, which all time should proclaim a wise one. The delay was irksome to the pioneers, who wished to be about the task of ploughing up the dollars in the new pathway to the Pacific, but it was justified, and all Canada now applauds the answer in the Yellowhead Pass.

About six miles from Swift's the trail wends its way among rocks and then turns sharply to the west, and we are in the entrance to the pass. Below us in the brush and heavy growth, is the Miette River, which, rising on the watershed, flows out of the Yellowhead and into the Athabasca. Miles ahead there looms a mountain, and, as Fred tells us, it is across the divide in British Columbia. The moment we enter the pass, there is a distinct change in vegetation. The more balmy winds from the west slope,

the chill taken off from their contact with the Japan current of the Pacific, find a highway in this right-angled cleft through the mountains, and right at the mouth of the Miette River the vegetation and denser growth, characteristic of another climate, has forced its way, only to melt and fade entirely before the far more barren and hardy growths of Alberta.

In British Columbia, the warmer weather and the greater moisture have turned each valley into a veritable jungle of rank and luxuriant growths. Great trees seek the sunlight hundreds of feet above their roots, while in the nether world about their bases flourishes a world in itself. Here alder-brush, ferns of the giant species, and smaller second-growth evergreens crowd and press each other for a chance to live among the mouldering tree-trunks and decaying vegetation of centuries agone. Great banks of velvet moss grow among the rich mould, from which time has made a carpet. Even in midday, one may travel miles in the primeval gloom, where the rays of the sun scarcely penetrate. Firs, spruce and cedar, breaking their way through this jungle, where the little plants and smaller growths struggle for each inch of earth and air, strike through this life and death struggle of the lower world and shoot their great trunks, clean-limbed as arrows, far above, where their gently waving tops bask ever in the sunlight, or else drink in the luxuriance of the moisture-

laden air, which bring the rain to feed the stems of the plant life, struggling for existence in the depth below.

And over all hangs the peace and stillness of nature, before man, with his mad projects of commerce and money-making, came to rip his highway through its very vitals.

The first night we camped on a hogback over the river, above which a steep slope arises perhaps a thousand feet. The day had been a long one, but we were not too tired to climb this almost perpendicular wall, from the crest of which we could look down into a hollow, within which there lies a beautiful apple-green lake. It is perhaps a thousand feet across and a mile long, and without a ripple it nestles like a mirror in this narrow crevice, which some ancient cataclysm of nature has moulded on the mountain's stalwart shoulder, for just beyond the barriers leap unto the snows that have nurtured this quiet pool, their offspring. Nick was with me and we were both armed with the implements to lure the finny tribe from their haunts. Mine was of the lastest make of rod and reel, while Nick had a pole cut with a jack-knife, for he, like these men of the mountains, did not go in for the latest wrinkles in the piscatorial art. As Fred used to say, "I don't want any of your new-fangled tinkle tankle. Give me a tepee pole, with a few feet of clothes line, a

bent nail and a piece of bacon, and when I get a bite, you'll soon see a fish in the frying-pan. If there's a bush in the way, that'll come too, and we can sort out the fish later." So, while I was connecting up my rod and getting my hook caught in the brush, old Nick was quietly yanking out trout with the regularity of clockwork.

I must confess that I never cared much for fishing, anyway, and it was no exception in this case. For half an hour I sat in the bushes, among some odd millions of mosquitoes, about half of which did an active business on my face and hands. A few hundred yards up the lake sat old Nick, with the rapt devotion of an ancient martyr, while a grey haze of insects hung in clouds about him, but their long delicate bills bent like hairs against his weather-hardened hide, and he was too intent on his task to mind even the few that, by diligent mining and sapping, bored their way through his skin and tapped the inner man. I never had a bite (barring the mosquitoes), while Nick returned to camp with twenty-two brook trout, averaging perhaps a pound apiece. There were five of us in the party and when we finished, there was nothing left but bones and abandoned fishheads to show where the small company of trout had sacrificed their little lives to the destiny of the frying pan.

That night there was a nice little moon, sailing

serenely to its decline below the ranges beyond the Athabasca, its silvery sheen gradually fading from our sight as it passed over the ragged edge of the mountains. The stars came out like little incandescent lamps from the blankets of the heavens, with the great North Star and the Dipper hanging above our heads in their silent majesty, which only the vastness of the wilderness and the peace of untrammelled nature can lend to that magnificent constellation. At our feet, with a barely audible murmur, the Miette gossiped to itself, as it slipped over the rocks on its way to the Arctic Ocean, with the only other sound to break the stillness, the murmur of the trees and the collapse of a log in our camp-fire, whose ruddy glow cast back the shadows of the near-by trees, to be absorbed in the gloom of the wilderness about us. And as I rolled into my sleeping bag for the night, my very soul rebelled that all this peace and serenity would soon be gone for ever before the invading armies of the construction gang. But, then, one always feels that way in some lonely distant nook in the mountains.

The second day of travel in the pass was a long and arduous one, for on that first trip I made through the great cleft the trail was beyond the compass of all our expletives. The valley is narrow, and when the way lies along the bottom, it is feet deep in mud—not the ordinary mud of the muskeg,

but the kind that has a foundation of boulders a foot beneath the surface, where the poor pack-horses are constantly putting their feet down into a muck-hole, and just as they think they have a firm foothold, their hooves slide off the surface of some submerged rock, and perhaps go a foot deeper into the slime, bringing them to their knees with a grunt. Every mile or two, the stream cuts in close to the mountain, necessitating a long detour around some shoulder and a climb of a thousand feet. Then we would come back into the bottom, picking our way among fallen timber and abysmal black mire, which means horses down and frantic exertions to get them up.

Once, while we were getting one unfortunate animal up, two others wandered too near the river-bank and got into a quicksand. One we hauled out by the tail, but the pioneer in this venture for a drink was up to his neck, so that it took an hour's work and two saddle-horses, with lariat ends made fast at strategic points on the down horse, to drag him out. In one place the trail winds up among the rocks, some fifty feet above the river, and then goes down again in great steps over slippery boulders, down which the horses half slid and half hopped. A single mis-step here would mean a somersault and a dead horse at the bottom, but over this bit they went one at a time, and each was given all the leisure in the world to pick and choose his way in

the hazardous descent. Below was more muck and then a long climb on to a side hill and another stretch of soft place where the uttermost exertion was necessary to keep the horses from getting mired. A stop of even a few minutes to chop a trail meant that some fool horse would blunder off on a tour of investigation and get into trouble.

After about six hours of this kind of travel, the valley sweeps back in a great meadow, and from the north a stream comes hustling down from the mountains in the spring freshets, spreading its flow all over the flat, as floodwood and mud in the brush can testify. This stream is known to the old timers as Dominion Creek and the little flat, feet deep in vetch and horsefeed, is hailed as Dominion Prairie.

Some early day prospector started a boom here years ago by staking a graphite claim, and even to-day the valley is full of the black float which is rich in the mineral so commonly used as a base for lubricants, paints and lead-pencils. Dozens of parties fought their way in through snow, and over trail, to plant the thousand stakes which are still rotting in miniature forests a few miles up the river. At first, it was supposed to be worth millions; but, as the years passed by, the claims were allowed to run out, and as far as I know, no one ever made a dollar out of them. It is not unlikely, however, that when the steel comes, with all that it means, in the way of

expert engineers and modern methods of handling minerals, some of these claims may again become of value, though my own engineer, whom I had out on a subsequent trip, was not optimistic. But time will tell, and Dominion Prairie may yet become the centre of an important industry.

As the river was not too high, and running in several different channels, we crossed with no difficulty and camped in a regular park, with the river flowing at the end of our lawn. Unfortunately, our whole party fell ill here from eating some canned stuff, and for three days we lay in our tents and abused the cook. He denied his guilt, however, and to prove that point, he ate all that was left of the suspected dish and, much to our disgust, seemed to relish it hugely; and, though we watched him expectantly, he never turned a hair. On the fourth day, we were sufficiently revived to resume our march. The trail skirts the meadow and with the mountain swings back toward the Miette, where the whole valley is narrow once more. The right-of-way of the steel, however, disdains these detours, and from the stakes planted in the meadow, goes stalking across this bit of open on a 40-foot fill. And now we were once more close to the river bank and in a dense growth of timber and vegetation, and after a few hundred yards more we forded the river itself and moved westward through the big fir and spruce

trees that towered above us on every side. The country seemed flat and level as a table.

After riding along for some miles, we came across a small brook that leaps and runs over the rocks. Suddenly we realized that it was running west instead of east. While travelling through what had seemed to us a level forest, we had crossed the backbone of the continent into British Columbia and at the very summit of the Yellowhead Pass. As it had commenced to rain, we decided to camp on the shore of this brook. So dense was the foliage that it was impossible to tie up and unpack until we had cleared a space beneath four great firs that stood one on each corner of an almost perfect square. Long after we had camped, and our tents were up, Fred, who was off cutting firewood for our camp-fire that night, called to me to come his way. Not fifty paces from our tents, amid the balsam and needles that for centuries had been lying about and spreading a carpet for us, there stood a gigantic old spruce. At first I could see nothing about it, but that it was a whopper, but on following Fred's finger I noticed a great scar on the trunk. The bark had evidently been deeply wounded at one time and a great outer surface was rolled back, leaving a smooth grey-weathered surface some two inches deep. On looking closer, I saw written in a clear round hand, in the red of the engineer's keel "C.P.R. B.M. 3720–1876." For a

moment it meant nothing to me, and then I realized the meaning of it all. All those years past, the mountains had echoed the shouts of another survey party hunting a way to the Pacific, and this was the bench mark of their location of the summit to be crossed; and yet the powers that were in those days lacked the foresight of one, Charles M. Hays, of to-day, for they listened to the silver voices of the politicians who had interests along the line to the south, and so it was that when the Canadian Pacific Railroad was built, the picturesque Kicking Horse Pass, with its impossible problems and grades, was the route chosen, while the ideal Yellowhead was abandoned and the surveys, made these many years ago, grew yellow and dusty in official pigeon-holes back in Eastern Canada. But the pass that went begging those days was not lost on the newer "Man of Empire" of to-day, and what the Canadian Pacific officials scorned in 1876, they may well live to bemoan in 1913, when the competition of the Grand Trunk Pacific with its inappreciable grades and corresponding low rates will cut deeply into the coffers of what heretofore has been a monopoly traffic.

CHAPTER XIV

In which we make a Brief Exploration toward the Head of the Fraser River

AFTER leaving the continental summit of the Yellowhead Pass, the trail winds and zigzags for a couple of miles through the timber, which is so dense that even the mountains, towering on both sides of the narrow pass, are lost to sight, for at this place it is about 1,000 feet across.

The first man who goes over a trail aims to make it as near a straight line as possible, but the labour of cutting through tree trunks fallen across the way is so great and delays the progress so much that every few hundred yards a detour is made. Perhaps the trail is not travelled again for a year or two, and when the mountaineer comes dragging along in the van of his pack-train, he finds newly fallen timber across the path, and other detours are made, with the result that the trail through dense woods often winds back and forth to such an extent that two or three miles of the narrow ribbon have to be threaded to make a single mile in a straight line. We spent

a couple of hours on the next few miles, until at last the flash of water through the tree-trunks ahead spelled to us the coming of a lake. It is the Yellowhead Lake, a beautiful sheet of water 5 or 6 miles long and a mile or so wide, narrowing down in the middle and bulging out at both ends. On the south side, the shore slants up to an angle of 40° until it reaches the steep slant of a wall, which rears from its rocky base a peak some 6,000 or 7,000 feet above the trail. From the water's edge to the sheer rock, where the mountain rears up, is a solid stretch of deep green timber, that from a distance looks like an army of trees storming some rocky citadel. As the rock is approached, the timber advance is broken and fallen, even as the first thin skirmish line of an advancing column melts and shrinks before the fire of a stubborn defence.

Our way swings to the northern bank, where the trail winds along the side of a gentle hill, overhanging the placid water of the lake, which lies without a ripple in the summer sunshine. Near the "narrows," between the upper and lower bulges in the lake, a little peninsula juts out to meet an opposing point of land from the southern shore, which together have made what some day may be called the Upper and Lower Lakes. If nature ever designed an ideal spot for a camping place in the wilderness, it is surely this same spot, for the valley abounds in

berries and the lake is full of fish. No doubt, at some not far distant day, a gigantic tourists' hotel will stand on this very point, while the curious from across the water will sit out on broad verandas in easy chairs, and speculate as to the distance of the magnificent snow-caps that rear their heads to the south and east.

But we are trying to make up for lost time now, and so push on past the end of the lake and go into camp on a little plateau a mile below, where the stream it feeds squeezes its way through a narrow throat in the valley. Just across from our camp, the main stream of the Fraser comes tumultuously in from a defile that is cleft in the southern wall. Fred had heard that there was fine timber up this valley, outside the three-mile limit of the reserve, that has been put on both sides of the right-of-way. As there is no pack-trail up this valley, which we intend to explore, we planned to discard the horses and with packs on our backs make the expedition on foot. I had tried this method of transportation before, but only for a mile or two, and never for any extended trip, though I have done it since on many occasions, and then, now and always, I pronounce it the supreme limit of wretchedness and misery—this making a pack-horse out of one's self. As our sojourn away from the pack-train was to be but of a comparatively few days, I decided not to take a bed

or blankets, but to confine myself to grub, rifle ann a sweater. The party was formed of Fred, Nick, the engineer, and myself, and among ourselves we divided the makings of a fairly respectable grub-pile. Fred had the pots, pans and the axe, while the rest of us took small lumps of the bannock (baking powder bread) which we called biscuits. Three of these a day were our rations.

Our first effort was to cross the stream that came out of the Yellowhead Lake, and this we did by felling a great 80-foot fir-tree across the river. As it stood high up on one bank, and its tip reached across to another small bluff, it made us a narrow bridge some twenty feet above the stream. This is the sort of enterprise I never did care for, but it was the only way; so with packs swinging from our backs and with rifles in hand we balanced ourselves across the torrent like a walker on a tight rope. And then began the slow grinding misery, which is the every-day, all-day, performance in passing through an unbroken wilderness with one's total belongings tugging from his back. At first the 40, 50, or 60 pounds seems light enough, but after the first half-hour, it is like lead and by noon it is a millstone, while, when night comes, it is a great black night-mare hanging to one like the Old Man of the Sea to Sindbad the Sailor. The valley we were threading was a narrow one, with the Fraser, a roaring

obstreperous stream, fuming and fighting with great boulders every foot of the way. Old Man Fraser, who dubbed this river the " Bad River " years ago, when he first saw it, 600 miles below, near Fort George, would have agreed with the old adage, " As the twig is inclined, so the tree is bent," for

Human pack-horses

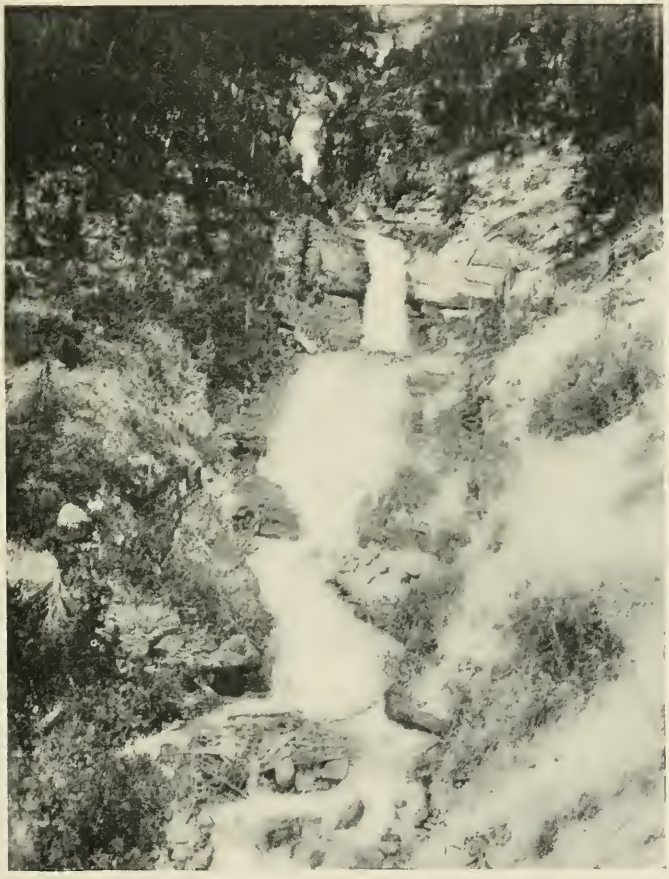
certainly this stream starts out in the naughtiest way possible, and over its long career of travel to the Pacific it is having constant relapses in rapids, canyons, and impossible contortions, through awe-inspiring gorges.

Fred, who is like a mountain sheep in agility, was off in the lead, jumping over fallen logs, like a steeple-

chaser in the home stretch, and in five minutes he was out of sight, with only the crashing of brush to indicate which way he had gone. With us, it was different and resolved itself into a slower problem: climbing over windfalls, then putting heads down and by sheer strength shoving ourselves and our packs through an undergrowth that was so dense that the branches of one bush would be interwoven with those of its neighbours. Then we would come into a bit of Jack-pine growth, where the trees, 8 or 10 feet high, were growing in some places less than a foot apart, so that we could barely squeeze our bodies through the narrow openings. A mile or two of such going, and we would come to a cut-bank, where the river swept in to a sheer rise of a gravel bank for hundreds of feet. This meant that we would have to climb up laboriously, perhaps 500 or 1,000 feet through brush and over fallen logs to get to the top of it. Then, after a quarter of a mile more, our way would be blocked by a deep gulley, cutting back half a mile or more. To go around meant limitless effort, and so down we would come again, slipping and sliding over logs, tearing our shirts and clothes with the dead limbs.

After an hour of this, the sweat was pouring off us, like the downpour from a showerbath. We had started early in the cool of the morning, when the flies and mosquitoes were still doing a conservative business,

but by ten o'clock the good word had gone abroad that we were among them, and they hung about us in grey clouds. If one sat down on a log to rest,



A series of waterfalls, snapped from the trail.

in one instant they all alighted, literally crowding each other for a space to get a nibble. I have taken a single slap at hand or wrist and killed twenty at

a blow, while my blue hunting shirt would be grey with armies, prospecting for some opening whereby their bills could reach the skin. By 11 o'clock we had completely lost sight of Fred, and the only sound that answered our calls was the steady roar of the river at our feet. At 12.30 we camped, which is to say, we built a small fire and sat down in a network of fallen logs by the side of the river. The moment we sat down, the mosquitoes came from all directions, with the gentle insidious hum of their countless millions, which to me is the most subtly exasperating and iniquitous sound that this world affords.

There were three of us left—Nick, Sawyer and myself. As Fred had the pots and pans and the axe, we ate our bun apiece, smoked a pipe and rested for perhaps an hour. "Shall we go back?" asked Nick, with the most utterly downcast look imaginable. I was certainly anxious to go back, as already I ached in every limb, and my shoulders felt as though they had been branded with hot irons where the packstraps had been tugging since early morning, but I still felt interested in that block of timber, so we slung on our burdens and started once more on our way. We conceived the idea that if we climbed up to the foot of the mountain wall, we would get out of the timber and mosquitoes and travel faster, and so we dragged our way up some odd thousands of feet

of misery until we reached the tumble of rock which formed the detritus that centuries had been piling up between the cliffs and the timber line. We hit the trail steadily until 7, now staggering over rocks, now forced back into the valley by gulches cut into the mountain, and then forced up again by cut banks on the river's shore, too steep for us to negotiate. By 5 o'clock in the afternoon, all conversation had ceased, and each step forward was a physical effort which I hate to think of. A fallen log across the way we were travelling would look bigger than a mountain, and the effort to crawl over it became so great that half of the time we would collapse in a heap on the other side. Seasoned mountaineers, I dare say, would have made light of the enterprise, but for us it was the most killing, heartbreaking effort that I ever forced myself to make; and toward nightfall, each tiny obstacle looked so big that I could have sat down and sobbed like a child.

About 6 o'clock, I suggested to Nick, who was carrying the heaviest burden, and with grim-set face was struggling along in the lead, that we strike down on to the river bottom and camp in the first place that looked good to him. It speaks for the nature of the country when I say that it took us one solid hour to find a place to spend the night, and to get to it we had to drag ourselves over a

mile or so of soft marshy ground, that we went into up to our ankles at every step. By 7 we were at the river's edge once more and camped. The country was so utterly broken and cut up that we could not find a place the size of a blanket that was level, but we chose the best spot we could find under the circumstances. It was a little patch, about 12 feet by 8, on the bank of the river, that sloped down so that there were few places where we could set a pail of water without its turning over. We had no axe, as Fred had the only one that we deemed it wise to take. No axe in the mountains means no happy home, for one can do little or nothing in the way of a camp-fire or shelter without the hunter's greatest friend. We dragged up some flood wood and broke off some dead limbs to make a fire, and then sat down to all the supper we could rake up between us, which consisted of three cold potatoes, some dry bread and a small can of beans. As Fred had the coffee, we had nothing to drink but water.

After the sun went down behind the mountains, it began to get cold. Sawyer had the only blanket in the party, which we declined to share, as we had ridiculed him all day for taking it along, but even then I did not regret my decision in leaving my bed, for when one is hours on the trail by day with a woollen blanket or bedding dragging at one's back,

it is a source of constant exasperation. I would rather be cold at night than baked alive during the day. So we let the engineer have his blanket, while Nick and I sat by the camp-fire and put on the little sticks that we could gather in the vicinity. With my hunting knife, I cut a few green boughs and put them on the ground to keep the rocks from digging into me too much, and turned in. Nick did the same. Every half-hour the fire would die down, and we would be awakened by the cold, whereupon we would have to get up and rebuild it. First one and then the other of us would tend the blaze. It got down well below freezing point that night, for in the morning, there was half an inch of ice in the can that we had used for water.

This trip made a very unfavourable impression on me, all things considered, and as I recall it to mind, it brings out such a flood of unpleasant reflections that I might go ahead here in this way for pages, but I think I have written altogether too much about it already, for I am sure it isn't very interesting anyway. I only introduced it to give the unfamiliar reader an inkling of what it is like —this packing on one's back in a country where there are no trails, but plenty of mosquitoes. It is no place for tender-feet, or anybody in fact, except the hardest of the hard, which I was not at that time. So I'll skip all the rest of this trip and let it go by

saying that we travelled up to where the Fraser forks, and the two little twin streams disappear, each in its own tangled valley, heading up among the snow-caps.

The timber we had come to look at had been burned over, and leered at us as a forest of charred tree trunks, from the distant point from which we got a view of it, so we turned back for our camp. In the course of time, we came dragging in about a half a mile apart, for when we began to get in sight of the familiar bluff that loomed up behind the plateau where our camp was, each struck out for himself, for our food, such as it was, had been nearly exhausted and we were all famishing. When I emerged on the little clearing where our tents were pitched, the sight of it seemed to me about the sweetest thing that I had ever seen. Tom, the cook, was sitting under a tree reading a book, while a long line of clothes and socks hung out on a cinch rope, drying in the sun. Fred was reclining peacefully in the tent, smoking his pipe and also reading a book. For once I was pretty much disgruntled, but he greeted me cheerfully with the query, " Well, she's a great country—this Upper Fraser. How do you like her ? "

" What made you go back with all our tinkle-tankle and the axe ? " I asked irritably.

He only laughed as he replied, " Oh, you fellers

are easy and pretty green too. As soon as I saw what a rotten stream she was up there, and the number of rapids and water-falls in her, I figured she wasn't no stream to drive logs on anyhow, so what was the use in poking along up through that brush and down trees, lookin' for a lot o' timber which a feller couldn't get out anyhow. I did call for you fellers anyhow, and as I didn't get any answer, I figured you'd all hit for camp, just as I'd done." After I had had a bite to eat, I rolled into my blankets and passed off to sleep, while old Nick, when he came dragging in, did not even wait for a bite, but crawled into his tent and was snoring within two minutes.

And from that day to this, I have never regarded travelling with a pack-train as being in the nature of real hardship ; for, when one has food to eat, on which subsistence is possible, a dry bed to sleep in, and the means and material from which to make a roaring camp-fire, there is really not much lacking that goes to make up for real comfort. The days on horseback may be a bit draggy and monotonous, but that is not a circumstance to the days when one is one's own pack-animal from daylight to dark. A trip like this is a good thing, for it makes one enjoy the luxuries of a real camp, and have more sympathy with the patient pack-horses who are forever bearing the heat and burden of the day.

CHAPTER XV

Which deals with the Trail from Yellowhead Lake to the Tête Jaune Cache

ONE night under canvas, with some real food, a roaring camp-fire and a sleeping bag on pine boughs, recuperated us all more than a bed and the cuisine of New York's finest hotel, and when we hit westward on the trail in the early sunshine of the following morning, I felt that the luxury of travel with a pack-train was only a step below that of a Pullman car. The mere tinkling of the bells on the horses and the sight of our grub-pile, tents, and bedding neatly tucked away on the pack-saddles, seemed to be the height of civilization to me in contrast with the desolation up the Fraser, with no beds, cold night temperatures and meagre diet. I always look back on that particular bit of trail we did that day as a charming one, though I believe most of the people who travel over it abuse it as being a " draggy old day with rotten going." But to me, it was fine, and I sat on my little cayuse and smoked my pipe with a far greater sense of well-being and physical comfort than I ever recall having

A typical bit of the Yellowhead trail.

experienced on a train *de luxe* or an ocean greyhound. Such is contrast, and from such, incidentally, is to be derived one of the greatest benefits of knocking about in a rough country. When one comes home and actually lives in a house, there is no such thing as genuine discomfort. If the cook leaves suddenly, we can cook for ourselves, or, if there is no food in the house, we can go to bed without, for, at least, there is a warm place to sleep. Perspective is a great thing. By that I mean it is very pleasant to see things in their true relative importance. If one has lived on next to nothing, slept out in the rain without blankets, frozen without protection and is still able to smile once in a while, then I maintain that there are very few things that the life of the city affords that can ever ruffle one's temper—much less be considered actual discomforts. I often wish, when I hear some crank of a husband abusing his wife for the failure of her cook to have everything just so, that I could take that gentleman and set him down in the rain, some five hundred miles from a railroad, and feed him on bacon and dry bread for a week, and then let him see how really trifling the whole question of physical well-being is, anyway.

In the cities, nearly every act of the day, from getting up to going to bed, is surrounded by the absolutely artificial in real values. We eat too

much, and most of it is for its taste, or because it is conventionally fashionable, and not because we need it to keep our vitality alert. We live in overheated houses in the winter, and wear hideous clothing at all times to conform with somebody's standard of the beautiful. All day long we smirk and smile at people we don't care a cuss about and they do the same with us. In the mountains all is normal and natural, and it is not until one has lived for months in the open that the realization sinks in as to how very little is required, of either food, clothing or warmth, to keep the body in a state of health, and one rarely, if ever, equalled when we are surrounded by the so-called luxuries and necessities of life, without which in town we are ill-tempered and miserable.

However, this has nothing to do with the Yellowhead trail, which all this time is running along a little to the south of west from our last camp. Every now and then it dips down on to nice little meadows near the river, and then again swings back on to higher benches, with now and then a bend to the north, to swing around the head of some gulley. Everywhere are berries: blueberries in cartloads; raspberries of several varieties abound with now and again rich patches of Saskatoon berries, while the ground in places is red with wild strawberries. Every few miles apart, an embryo river comes tumbling out of a cleft in the mountain wall

to join its energy to that of the Fraser, which flows along here with great majesty and dignity, just as though it hadn't been raising the " Old Nick " a few miles above, and with nothing to indicate that it proposes to do a thousand times worse before it gets much further in its travels. It is a great hypocrite, this Fraser, as it moves for-miles, its smiling surface the picture of an innocent-minded " Charity for all, with malice· toward none " kind of a river, fairly begging the unwary to build a raft or try a canoe on its peaceful surface. Then in a mile, it will swing around a bend, with a transition from a kitten to a man-eating tiger, that has the whole paraphernalia of destruction lurking in rocks, roaring rapids, gigantic eddies, and unsuspected currents, each in itself more than capable of the utter undoing of the unwary traveller who has trusted himself to its current.

After a few miles on the trail we come upon Poplar Creek, and just beyond it Grant Creek, which is doing a great business among rocks and boulders, as it comes leaping and bounding down the side of the mountain. Comparatively few prospectors have been through here, and that handful have largely confined themselves to the possibilities along the trail itself, with an occasional scramble up on some near-by slope to chip off a bit of rock that looks promising. Yet, even with this mere scratching

of the surface, finds of more or less value are being turned up by the energetic, whose field in this country is without limit; for, in two hours he can be over the first range that skirts the way, and exploring a virgin wilderness. One active and tireless prospector followed up this very Grant Creek, not many years ago, and brought out with him from back in the wilderness beyond the range a sample or two of good-looking rock. Analysis showed that it was the finest kind of marble that has yet been discovered on this continent, and he and his friends are only awaiting the facilities for transportation to open up what may prove one of the most valuable quarries in the West. Then this flat around Grant Creek may be the sire of some little town, where one may see long lines of flat cars, waiting their turn to be freighted with the cubes taken from the mountain and bound to all parts of the continent, to figure in the construction of giant buildings, with ornate columns and handsome façades.

That night we camped on the banks of the Moose River, the largest stream entering into the Fraser that we have seen so far. The river, which is several hundred feet across in its main channel and barely fordable for pack-horses, even in low water, comes tumbling down from a crack in the mountains, not 600 yards from the point where the engineers have sketched out the site of a railroad

bridge. A straight fall of nearly two hundred feet comes leaping out of a cleft in the range, which is so narrow at the top that an active man could all but leap across, though this course is not recommended. Here, for untold centuries, anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 horse-power has been running madly to waste, but not many years can elapse before this wanton extravagance, in which nature is throwing away one of her greatest treasures, will be terminated by the hand of man, whose energies will soon be about the task of converting this " white fuel " into electricity, to light the towns along the line and supply power for any near-by enterprises. And laugh not, dear reader, for, though the steel this day was just struggling out of Edmonton, there have since been many bands of tireless prospectors picking their way among the rocks on this stream, and already a dozen or more mineral claims have been staked out within a few miles of this very place, while rumour states that a town site is to grace the west bank of this same Moose River. To prophesy in Canada is to stretch one's imagination as to the limit of development, and then discount one's amazement at the meagreness of one's estimate when the boom comes along.

We camped a night on the Moose River, and in the early morning, while the water is at its lowest for the day, we made the ford. It is a nasty crossing, as

Where the trail winds through the burned-over timber.

the way is just a few yards above the junction with the Fraser. Besides, the horses must take-off into a hole some four feet deep which in high water is not negotiable at all. The danger is that some indiscreet horse may wander from the narrow ford and be carried down into the main Fraser, when he might just as well be charged off to "profit and loss," as rapids a quarter of a mile below are just waiting for some such contingency to pound to pieces on their jagged teeth what is left of the drowned bit of horseflesh. But I have always been lucky at this crossing, and have never lost a horse there, though I believe others have been less fortunate. However, Fred is a wise man on water and when he sizes it up, with his pipe in his mouth, and says, "Well, boys, I guess we can make it," it is a pretty safe bet that we'll make camp that night with our inventory intact.

From the river and through green timber, the trail is bad for a couple of miles, and at the end of a bit of burned-over land it ends up in a marsh at the foot of Moose Lake itself, which is one of the most beautiful spots along the line of the new survey. With the mountains standing in close, there is just enough room left for this lake, which is an average of two miles wide, perhaps, and seven and one-half miles from tip to tip. When first I went that way, there was very little of the country burned over, and the superb timber crowded down to the very edge

of the lake on both sides. But although the scenery was fine, we soon forgot all about it, for there were many impediments in the way and constant chopping was the order for the day, while every now and again a veritable jungle would force us out on to the brink of the lake where we would drive the horses up to their ankles, until the water shelved off and forced us back into the timber again.

All the old timers call this the worst day's travel in the Yellowhead Pass, and I rather agree with them, all things considered, for once the pack-train pulls out from Moose River, there is no horse feed or place to make a camp until a small park is reached, some two miles west of the end of the lake. This makes a drive of 16 or 18 miles, which is a long one for a pack-train even on a road, but over a rotten trail with fallen timber to be chopped out of the way every few minutes, it makes a pretty long stretch. I have been over this bit three times, and have never made it in less than eight hours, while on this particular occasion, when we were among the first over it that year, we were ten hours or more negotiating it. This meant no rest or food for man or beast, save the plucking of an occasional berry by the wayside. From the foot of the lake, the way leads to a small bench where the forest breaks away in a park, more beautiful than any man ever designed, with the mountain at one

side and the Fraser rolling at its foot, where its ripple serves as a lullaby for campers.

We came out into this little oasis of beauty about six in the evening and found it knee-deep in lush grasses for our tired train. As we emerged from the woods, great drops of rain began to splash down. The silence of a long day of exhausting work had fallen on us all, but the sight of the camp ground before us and the realization that the day's work was almost over, worked on us all like magic, and in two minutes we were all whistling or singing as we worked feverishly to make our " happy home " tenable before the downpour began in earnest. By this time we were well organized and every man moved with the greatest celerity, not one making an unnecessary move. In twenty minutes, our horses were rolling on their backs in the cool wet grass, while we had our tents pitched, our beds dragged in out of the wet, and two great ripping fires roaring cheerfully in front of our canvas houses.

It rained steadily for two days. I have heard many people complain about rainy camps, but I don't recall ever having enjoyed two more delightful days in my life. With plenty of books, a liberal supply of tobacco, and the fire going before the warm dry tent night and day, I lay within its ample recesses, my whole being exuding contentment, as I listened to the interminable con-

versation that went on day in and day out between Fred and his brother, on every subject under the blue canopy of heaven. The two had been reared on a farm, back in Michigan, and they used to sit by the hour discussing the old days together. When this trip was over, I felt as though I knew every old settler in the county whence they had come, for their characters, and those of their descendants and forebears for generations each way, were carefully dissected. Here is a sample of their conversation, as both would be sitting in front of the fire, with chins resting on their knees and pipes in mouth.

Nick would say, "Do you remember old man Twilliger?"

"I reckon I remember when his he-calf had the colic that cold winter," Fred would reply.

"Didn't have colic at all. It was lung fever," Nick would retort aggressively.

"Oh, I reckon it wasn't lung fever—not by a —— sight," Fred would drawl out.

"I said 'twas lung fever," Nick would shout.

"Well, I don't care what you said, I said it was colic."

"I know better," Nick would reply, "I sure treated the critter."

"The worse for you then, if you don't know colic from lung fever," Fred would say.

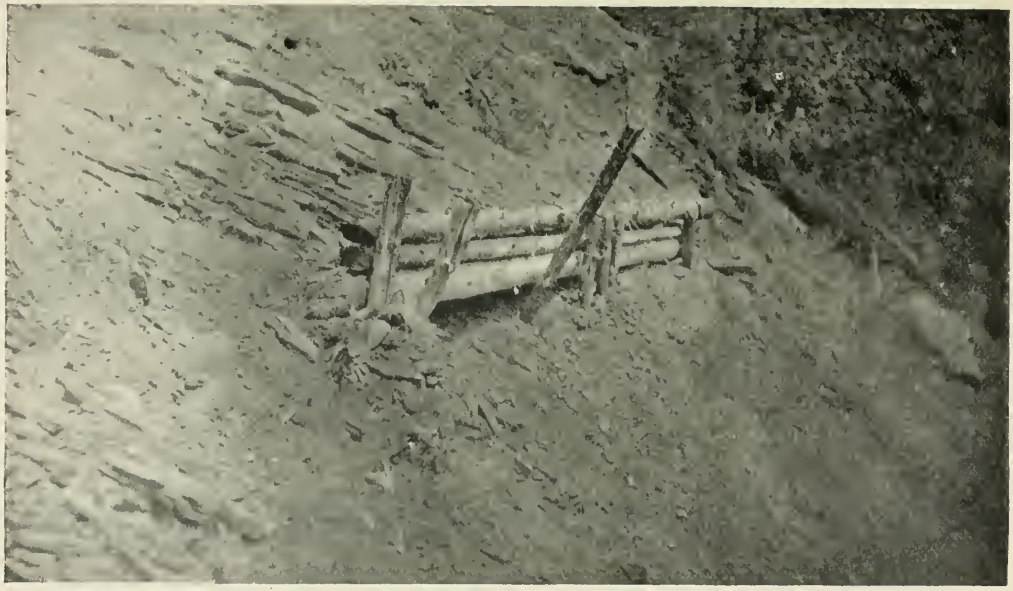
"Do know it."

"Don't."

"Well, I know better than you do, anyhow," etc., etc., for an hour.

I recall this Twilliger calf especially, as it first came into our conversation at this camp, and we never heard the last of it. I wish I had a dollar for every night that I have drifted into my dreams with the wrangle about that historic animal and its complaints the last sound to reach my ears. If I had, I could easily afford to buy a handsome granite tombstone for the lamented creature, that, whatever its complaint was, turned up its toes to the daisies shortly after the treatment. At least, I think I have its complaints, but not being a veterinary, I am not sure. However, though they used to wrangle by the hour, there was never a word of genuine ill-humour passed between them.

While we were camping in this spot in the two days' downpour, we were joined by a singular outfit of two, who dragged in about evening of the second day, a man of about sixty and a boy of about fourteen. Neither of them was familiar with the mountains, and it was a mystery to us how they ever got across Moose River, without knowing the ford. They had two horses, and both were packed with everything under heaven, except a kitchen stove. We invited them to supper and unpacked their horses, and helped them get up their tent, while they were



The worst bit of trail in the Yellowhead, where a single slip means a slide of hundreds of feet into the Fraser River that roars below.

drying out at our fire. As soon as we started on the job, Fred remarked in his easy way to the old man, "Say, friend, how in the h—— have you got this critter packed?" for there were none of the signs of the diamond hitch, which is the second nature to all the packers and trappers in this territory, and is the simple arrangement with which we were all familiar. This knot, which makes the taking off of packs a matter of but a few moments, is simplicity itself, but this horse was bound with ropes running hither and thither in every direction.

"Oh, it's all right," replied the stranger cheerfully. "If she don't come off handy, you can cut the ropes. We've got it down pretty fine now, me and the boy, and sometimes we don't have to cut more than a couple of ropes to get the packs off."

Fred looked at him in horror. I don't suppose he ever cut a pack rope in his life.

After undoing numerous knots, we got off the pack-cover, underneath which were ten thousand odds and ends, tied on with bits of string and short lengths of clothes line. But they were a good-hearted pair and camped along with us for the next couple of weeks. They were father and son, out looking for a coal mine, and very companionable as far as we were concerned, although they quarrelled incessantly among themselves.

The third day it cleared and, after we had helped

Mount Robson and Yellowhead Pass.

our guests catch their horses and pack, we all set off together. The only real bad spot in the going was near the end of our drive, when the trail runs across the face of an almost perpendicular cut bank, composed of shale and almost as hard as rock. Where the way leads, it is perhaps a hundred feet above the Fraser, which at this particular point is working itself into a fury, preparatory to going into a canyon a half-mile below. Above, the steep slope sheers up for a thousand feet. The crossing, which is perhaps a quarter of a mile long, has no place in the trail over a foot wide, and is undoubtedly the most dangerous place in the Yellowhead Pass for pack-horses, as a single mis-step means a slide down into the river and a trip into the canyon, which is guaranteed to produce a complete corpse at the other end. If there is anything in the world more irritating in a bad place than a pack-horse, I have yet to know what it is. Of course, we all got off and walked, leading our horses, each man driving a couple of animals ahead of him. I have been over this bit several times since, but have never made the trip without my hair rising at the prospect of seeing one of our beasts go down into the river. A horse that has been plodding along the entire day, without ever moving out of the trail, will get out in the very worst part, when he will stop and try to scratch his ear with his hind hoof, carefully balancing

The kind of country that makes the packers curse. The trail near Tête Jaune Cache.

himself on his other legs. The horses following, which under ordinary circumstances would naturally stop and go to sleep, would all make frantic efforts to turn back, starting rocks sliding and splashing into the river. If you hit a horse from your position in the rear with a well-aimed rock, he is apt to start so suddenly as to lose his foothold, so all one can do is to wait, with the earnest wish that the beast were tied to a tree where you could hit him with a club.

Just beyond this point, the mountain range breaks to the north, to let in the Grand Forks from an adjacent valley, and as we file out from the shadow of the bulk that has been towering above us the most beautiful vista in Canada confronts us, for there, a few miles up the valley, is Mount Robson, the highest mountain in British Columbia, as far as is known at present.

The setting is ideal, for the valley of the in-pouring river is flanked on both sides by two big mountains, and ten miles back the great black bulk of Mount Robson towers straight up into the clouds, which hang about it like a cap of fleece, parting from time to time to show the wondrous snow peak and glacier-clad flanks of this majestic edifice of nature. There is nothing in Canada that I have ever seen that can compare with it, for it is not only lofty in itself, rising to nearly 14,000 feet, but we are down low, perhaps 2,700 feet, and the rise seems almost

sheer above the trail. This point is really the end of the Yellowhead Pass, for at this place the mountains break away more widely, and as one looks back over the way that he has been travelling, the cleft of the pass seems almost like the outlet of a tunnel. So many much lauded passes have to be pointed out before they can be realized as such, but this defile we have traversed is almost like some great cut that has been designed by an engineer.

We camped on the bank of the Grand Forks River, near its junction with the Fraser, where we lay in our tents the balance of the day, praying that a favourable wind would strip the clouds from off the crown of the shy monarch of the Rockies. At last our patience was rewarded, and just at sunset the last, thin wisp of cloud drifted away over the ice-fields, leaving the mountain clear from its barren base to its snowy top. Long after the sun had set for us down in the valley, its dying rays of crimson flooded the snowy peak that loomed above us, with a nearness that seemed, in the fading twilight, to increase with each minute. Many a mountain climber, in the days to come, when the steel has made the base accessible, will try his skill on these crags and ice-fields, and many, I dare venture, will come to grief in the attempt, for a more difficult mountain to climb seems hard to imagine, as its side rises almost sheer from the bank of the Fraser. Several enter-

prising parties tried climbing it later in that very summer, but the only man who succeeded was the Reverend Kinney, who accomplished the feat with the assistance of an old packer, who accompanied him. After encountering fearful hardship and innumerable dangers they finally reached the summit, which a few months afterwards thwarted an English party who tried the venture, and who were loaded to the guards with ice axes, ropes and imported experts in shinning up ice peaks. I admired the minister after I had heard about his enterprise, but I cannot say I envied him in his achievement.

We found the ford of the Grand Forks not too bad, though I dare say it would be a ticklish place in high water. A few miles beyond is another stream which runs in from the north, called Swift Current, of which much the same might be said. Then the trail plunges into narrower country again, and for about ten miles wanders along the sides of the mountains, and then back into the valley. There is a very pretty fall of the Fraser along here, where the whole stream swings around a bend and plunges 30 feet in a single drop. Then there is a mile or two through heavy second growth timber, and we emerged at what is generally called the end of the pass—the Tête Jaune Cache.

CHAPTER XVI

Which contains a few Reflections on the Tête Jaune Cache and Introduces Three Fine Men

INASMUCH as the Tête Jaune Cache appears on every map of British North America that has been printed these many decades past, we naturally imagined there would be something or other of interest there, such as a ruin or some other old landmark ; but, as a matter of fact, the Cache, like some of the other places in the wilderness, is merely the name for a general location, and in this case, it is a place where three trails meet. From the north comes in the route from Kamloops, on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, with some 298 miles of muskeg, heavy timber, and innumerable fords and impossible rivers to cross. From the east, the trail that we have followed winds out of the pass from Edmonton, while to the north is the great water-trail of the Fraser River, which touches civilization first at Fort George, again at Quesnelle, in the Caribou country, and finally in its southern dip reaches the main line of the pioneer trans-continental at Ashcroft.

The way by which we had come had taken us just

seventy days, while the only other parties that I met there that year had taken fifty-four days to make the journey from Kamloops. To come up the river from Fort George, means on the average thirty days of constant heartbreaking work, poling a canoe or dugout up the river and lining it through the rapids, canyons, and other miseries which the Fraser affords. The result up to this time had been that comparatively few parties ever got there at all. For the poorer prospectors it was too expensive a trip and required too much of an outlay, and besides, the hardships were not of the kind that the bar-room prospector and grub-stake mining pioneer was looking for, while the time and difficulties in reaching the head of the Fraser were not attractive enough to lure the general tourist.

But one does not need to cast more than a cursory glance around the valley to see why the old-time Hudson Bay trapper with the flaxen hair made it his base, for it is about the most ideal camping ground between Edmonton and Fort George. The Fraser comes out of a small canyon just at this point and then spreads itself out into a deep, slow-flowing stream, in which rôle it travels along majestically for more than a hundred miles. The little canyon is really the last crack in the main range of the Rockies, which from here on go marching grandly along the north and east side of

The Tête Jaune Cache near the head of the Fraser River.

the Fraser, never again to thwart its pathway to the Pacific. In the same way, they slide off to the south in an easterly direction, while perhaps five miles away, across the river, is the backbone of the Selkirk Range, which stalks haughtily along the west and south side of the river, until just below the Grand Canyon the range loses heart, dwindles down into rolling foothills and disappears entirely, leaving the Rockies to disappear to the north on their way to Alaska like regiments and brigades of peaks and snow-caps. This general re-adjustment of the mountain ranges has left a great flat at the very head of this broad valley, which includes tens of thousands of acres of fine soiled, sparsely timbered, park-like area, which, after the mountains we have encountered, looks as flat as a billiard table.

Wending in from the south is the McGlennan River, which enters the Fraser a couple of miles below the canyon, if indeed the last spurt from the rocky wall can be dignified by such a name. Anyway, it is very narrow and the water swift enough to capsize any but a cleverly managed canoe. The McGlennan rises in a low summit, beyond which springs the fountain head of the Canoe River, which in turn flows into the mighty Columbia. Within a few miles of this summit is still another divide, beyond which the North Thompson River takes its first lease of life, and it is over into this watershed

A glimpse of the Tête Jaune Cache in the days before "the coming of the steel."

that the Kamloops trail winds its way, while an old travelled route occasionally taken is down the Canoe River to the so-called Boat Encampment on the Columbia, and then down this stream to Golden or Donald on the line of the railroad.

Thus it may be seen at a glance that the general locality of the Cache is unique in its strategic location in this whole country, for it is almost the only place where one may break out of the mountains in more than one direction. This possibility has been realized by the engineers, and while the surveyors of the Grand Trunk Pacific have sighted their instruments through the timber-clad valley of the Fraser, the pioneers picking out the route of the Canadian Northern, which is also struggling through to the Pacific, drove their stakes along the bank of the McGlennan, crossing the summit into the Canoe River Basin, and from that once more into the head of the North Thompson, down whose turbulent waterway their enterprise is scheduled to make its way to Kamloops and Vancouver.

From the Cache to Fort George, by river, the distance is somewhere between 325 and 350 miles, while by steel it is not quite 200 miles. Most of the way the river is slow flowing and deep, and, but for the rapids and canyon, would be easily navigated by shallow draft steamers, between those two points. Indeed, I learned that after I was in there, a small

steamer, by dint of lining and winching, did get up it over all these obstacles to the Cache itself.

At this point there must eventually be one of the most important towns in new interior British Columbia, for it is certain of two trans-continental lines, with the choice of sending its freight to Vancouver by the Canadian Northern, and to Prince Rupert and Fort George via the Grand Trunk Pacific, and eastward to Winnipeg and the Great Lakes by both, while there has been much talk of the Canadian Pacific eventually penetrating this same zone. The Fraser, with its wealth of unequalled timber stretching below the Cache for 200 miles, will be certain to bring both railroads a heavy east-bound traffic for the prairies at the start, while the probabilities of mineral developments in this new belt may, and probably will, start innumerable enterprises of that kind in the vicinity.

On Mica Mountain, which looks down in majestic silence on this potential metropolis, vast quantities of the mineral from which it takes its name have already been found, but efforts to take it out on pack-horses have not been remunerative, which is not remarkable, considering the character of the trail south, for it has the name of being the worst in a region where bad trails are the rule and good the exception. The coming of the steel will, beyond a doubt, focus the eyes of the mica industry

throughout the world on this ideal spot, and, if it proves to be present in the quantity and quality which the prospectors assert, Mica Mountain may yet be the factor to set the price of mica, wherever it is used. The soil is generally fertile, and thousands of acres in the vicinity of the Cache itself could be turned up without more ado and given over to the raising of produce. Down the river, the timber covers everything, but when that is once cleared, a soil will be discovered so rich in vegetable mould that it must inevitably prove a veritable Garden of Eden.

When we first pitched our tents in this spot, there was nothing there but an old trapper's cabin. Five years from that day will see as many thousands, while a decade may see street cars and sky-scrapers. If this seems an optimistic estimate, look at Saskatoon in Alberta. In 1903 it had a population of 129, while in 1911 it had over 14,000, so I do not feel that I am optimistic when I express the opinion that before many years have passed, one will be able to look at old Mica Mountain and the winding thread of the Fraser River from the window of a twelve-story office building from this very spot.

However, we didn't see anything like that on this trip. The trapper's cabin, before alluded to, was the nearest thing to civilization, and the door was broken off that. In the interior were a few old pack-saddles, a roll of blankets that some one had cached

On the Fraser River in 1909, at that time seventy-two days out from the Railroad, but now a stone's throw from the right-of-way of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

there, and a few empty tin cans lying about the floor.

Speaking of caches, let me say in passing, that a cache in those days in the wilderness was as safe from any human depredation, as gold locked up in a safety deposit vault. In the old Hudson Bay law, the penalty for the wanton theft of a cache was death, and rightly, for, to be more explicit, it is the custom for the hardy wayfarer when travelling in the remote wilderness, to leave a part of his grub-pile at some point where he can get it later. Perhaps he may make his cache and from it, as a base, make a hunting, prospecting or trapping trip that will keep him away for months, relying on what he has left to last him until he can reach civilization. To steal the contents of a cache, then, is to threaten him with starvation in the wilds. It is to the trapper much like the cutting of an air line to the diver a hundred feet below the surface. And so Indian and white man alike have the same respect for such hidden treasure, and hundreds and hundreds of both have gone hungry themselves many a time rather than rifle another man's means of subsistence. How different this is from the ethics of civilization, where everything that is not under lock and key disappears as by magic.

Here, in the heart of the wilderness, we can leave our treasures of bacon and flour (which spell

life) in a tree by the side of the trail, and your savage red man or uncouth mountaineer will pass it by, even though he be himself empty and all but starved, and would sooner think of cutting off his right hand than break into his neighbour's store. Personally, I have never heard of but one instance where a cache was molested and the wretch that did it is an outcast in the country now, though the day of his transgression was long before I went into the country; yet for years, and for 1,500 miles of trail and river between Edmonton and the Pacific, his name is known and reviled. Hundreds of trappers and pioneers, who have never been within a hundred miles of the particular country, nor have known the party in the episode, will say when the name is mentioned, "Oh, yes, I know of him. He's the —— —— —— that stole the cache over on the Fraser."

Give me for my choice the ethics of the primitive men that live in the wilds. If you are a good fellow and on the square, there isn't a ragged, half-starved prospector on the trail that would not divide his last crust with you, but if you are a crook and the word goes down the trail that you are, you had better "Saddle up and pull your freight" into the most distant land you know. In a new country, a man must be decent in order to survive. It is not like a city, where you can live next door to a bank-robber or a thief and never find it out. Here in the

glorious wilds, men are what they appear to be, or if they are not, they are soon found out and become hopeless outcasts, and an outcast in the wilderness is worse than " a man without a country."

We had expected to meet our prospector friends here in July, but the late spring and our many delays had set us back until the middle of August. I saw no signs of our prospectors, however, and was somewhat disappointed and discouraged. It seemed to me as though we had made a date to meet somebody at the North Pole, but Fred's remark was only " Oh, don't get excited. The boys agreed to meet us here and they're around in the mountains somewhere, and don't you forget it." But I had never met these particular " boys " and doubted but that we would fail of seeing them. Fred, however, who knew them, was as confident that they would fill their engagement as he was that the sun would rise on the morrow, and after I met them myself and got to know them better I fully shared his opinion.

The next day, while I was asleep in my tent, I heard the patter of hoofs in the trail and the next moment the tones of an unfamiliar voice. I tumbled out and beheld one of the finest specimens of manhood that the eye could ever wish to behold. Medium height, thick-set, eyes like steel, curly hair and a smile like sunshine, were the first impressions that I got of Bill Teare, who was one of the brothers of

whom I had heard and whom we had come so far to meet in this far-off valley.

"How-de-do," said Bill, and gave my hand a squeeze that made the bones crack. "We've been lookin' for your fellers for a month. Just about concluded you'd got held up in the rivers. I told the boys I'd slip up here and take a look at the trail to see if anybody had been this way. Soon as I seen all the horse-tracks, I calculated it was you and come right down to see you. We're camped off in the brush only a few miles away, and whenever you say the word we'll drop down the Fraser and have a look at the big ledge." And as he talked, he squatted down under a tree, sitting on his haunches like a kangaroo, and drew out of the recesses of his torn attire a pipe, which he proceeded to light.

Many people say that clothes make the man, but I am certain it does not apply to prospectors, for some of the best men I have ever known have been in rags and tatters, clothes torn and patched a score of times, and shoe-leather worn to the thinness of tissue paper. But they have been real men, who never knew what it was to quit, complain, or cheat a comrade. As a writer of verse has said, "Men with hearts of vikings and the simple faith of the child," they were. I have always greatly admired these two Teare boys, and though their ways have been rough and their lives far from culture and

advantages, yet I would unhesitatingly pick them as gentlemen of nature, and would gladly introduce them in any society, and be proud to call them my friends. And so would any one else that ever sat by their camp-fires or worked with them on the rivers of unexplored Western Canada. Nothing that the mountains had in their category of hardships could daunt them, and rain or shine, heat or frost, always found them with a happy smile and a cheerful word. What they had been through the few years before I had met them would have killed nine out of ten, even of their own kind. They were from Nova Scotia, and were well on the road to success in a small milling enterprise, when their establishment burned down and left them not only ruined financially, but in debt besides. They left the East and came out to British Columbia, where for years they worked as canoe-men on the Columbia River, saving every cent until the last debt was paid back home. As soon as they could save a grub-stake and the wherewithal to buy an outfit, they hit up into the country north of Quesnelle, along the Fraser River and, in the course of time, located a placer claim that seemed to them to be sufficiently promising to justify doing a lot of work on it.

They worked all the next winter along the railroad, and in the spring started an engineering enterprise that would have seemed impossible to many men

better equipped. In order to get water on their claim for the washing of the gravel, they had to carry a flume above the Fraser River, from a stream that came in from the other side. To do this, they packed in a cable on horses and strung it across the river, and on this they hung their flume; but in order to get the water on to their claim they had to do more, for a hill intervened. But this did not disturb them. With drills and dynamite, they drove a tunnel through the ridge for 600 feet. The first day that the water came on to their gravel they cleaned up £150 in gold dust. The second day it petered out. Their labour was lost, and when they came in that fall, they had nothing but their outfit. Another winter of hard work, and they were prepared to put in a solid year of fruitless efforts in the country along the Telegraph Trail.

The next summer they prospected in the Peace River country, for at that time it seemed assured that the new Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad would come that way. They got in too late, however, and lost nearly everything they had, and came out only when the snow and lack of food had driven them to it. The last 98 miles they made in December through ten inches of snow, with 80-pound packs on their backs and with the temperature 40° below zero; they did this stretch in forty-eight hours,

a record that I have never heard of being equalled. But they were jubilant, for they had samples of rock in the Peace River country that looked good, if the steel came, and with it the means of getting in heavy machinery to work it.

The first thing they heard on reaching the settlements was that the Yellowhead Pass was the route finally selected by the survey.

Not in the least discouraged, they went to work trapping that winter and snaring wild horses for their pack-train, and when the snow was off the mountains, they were at it again, this time working the side streams of the Fraser valley. On the Beaver, they had located an enormous ledge of quartz, and it was to look at this ledge that we had come.

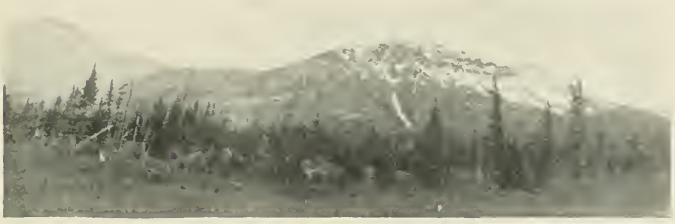
Bill was the older and Mort was the younger, and these two had worked together ever since their childhood, and never in my life have I seen two men work in such perfect unity. Whichever of the two spoke first was the leader in the suggestion and the other followed implicitly. If Bill got out of the canoe first, he took command for the moment, but if chance brought Mort ashore first, then it was he who picked the camp and directed the operations. These two chaps are known from Edmonton to Vancouver, and along the route one speaks of the Teare boys as a kind of wild game in the country. You meet a man

"The Teare Boys."
Two prospectors who are known on trail and river from Edmonton to the Pacific.

on the trail, perhaps, and he will say, " A Teare boy passed here yesterday, hiking to beat h——," just the same as though he would say, " I saw a big old grizzly on the mountain yesterday." And what these fellows can stand is beyond credence. To sleep out in the rain night after night never occasioned them a thought. If the going was bad on the rivers, they would jump into the ice-cold water up to their waists and drag the boat along with ropes, singing and shouting at the top of their lungs. If the grub-pile looked low one of them would pick up a gun and go out to see if he could get a bite of fresh meat. He might be gone a day or even a week, and when he would come in at the end of his trip, he would drop down just as casual as though he had only been to the river for a pail of water, with an easy " Let's have a bite to eat, I ain't et for two days." But more of them anon, for I am getting away from the thread of my story.

We found that these two and a third man, Charlie Keller (much of their own stripe), were camped a mile or two away on the bank of the river, and we joined them. Charlie was a canoe expert. That spring he had built a fine flat-bottomed boat at Golden, on the Canadian Pacific, and in this he had come via the Columbia and Canoe Rivers, dragging it over the summit, and down the McGlennan to the Cache, where he had fallen in with the Teares, who had

let him in on their prospect down on the Beaver. He was going out of the country himself, but as soon as we showed up, he cheerfully volunteered to go down the river with the boys, Fred Sawyer and myself, and have a look at the ledge ; and as his boat was large enough to hold us all, we gladly accepted the offer he made.



CHAPTER XVII

Down the Fraser via the Water Trail

IT was well after 2, on the afternoon of August 16, that we all climbed into Charlie Keller's boat and shoved off on to the waters of the old Fraser. For a moment or two the craft hung close to shore, and then, catching in the current, was snatched up and swept along down the stream, which averages anywhere from two to six or eight miles an hour. A mile or two below the Cache there was a big log jam, where the early summer freshets had piled up an abattis of flood-wood, ranging all the way from big trees down to tiny limbs. These jams are a menace to the uninitiated, as the water flows under them at a terrific rate, creating eddies and a strong suction toward them that is apt to drag the unwary on to the sharp spikes of the tree trunks, ramming holes in the sides of his craft, or capsizing them in the current, which immediately sucks the canoe, or whatever it may be, and its contents under the jam.

But our boys know these rivers and their menaces, large and small, as a scholar knows his book, and our

boat shoots around the obstacle and drops down the stream by another channel, through which the water pours like a mill-race. After dragging along behind a pack-train for many days, the life on the river affords the greatest ease in the world, for without an effort we can sit on our blankets in the bottom of the boat; and while we smoke and chat over the latest gossip of the trail, the river sweeps us along at two or three times the speed we can possibly get out of the horses. The valley here averages five or six miles across, from the base of the Rockies on the east side to those of the Selkirks on the west. The whole is well-nigh as flat as a board, and carpeted with dense forests of fir, spruce and cedar, as well as with hemlock, and I know not how many other varieties of a lesser growth.

"Cyclone," a type of a "snorty" bronch.

As we move on down the stream, the vegetation becomes thicker and denser until, after a few hours, the river's edge is hemmed in by a shore line that is so thick with underbrush and jungle that one literally requires an axe to get out of the canoe and up on the bank. But the survey has gone before us down this waterway, and every six or eight miles

we see their camping places, where the brush has been cleared away for a few yards from the river's bank and the trees stripped of their lower branches, which gives a few hundred square feet of clearing that stands out like an oasis from the dense and impenetrable background beyond. There is an old horse trail that extends twelve or fifteen miles below the Cache, but the pioneers that cut it lost heart when they had penetrated that far and gave up the job, and he who fares further on the way down the valley must either take to the river, or make the effort on foot, a task that tests the endurance of the most hardy, for if there is any country in the world to-day that stands as a sample of the primeval, it is this same valley of the Fraser. Giant cedars that measure six and eight feet across at the butt and soar 80 feet clear to the first branch are the largest trees, but immense spruce and fir rival them in height, while in the lesser world below, birch, cottonwood, alder and a dozen other smaller species crowd each other for space. The whole floor is sown with rotting trunks that must have been moulding for centuries. I don't know how long it takes a tree to rot, but it must require some time for a tree four or five feet through to mould to such an extent that you can dig through the brown decay with a shovel. Hundreds upon hundreds of these moss-grown trunks lie everywhere in the nether gloom,while great bunches of dank moss, with here

and there brilliant mushroom growths are sapping the nourishment from their rich vegetable mould. Ferns and creepers as high as your head are everywhere, and the whole so dense that one on foot and unimpeded could hardly make a mile an hour. Here and there are little openings and "burns" where the timber has been scorched by fire, and then died and

The Fraser River, a thousand miles from its mouth.

fallen in hopeless confusion, one great tree lying prostrate over another.

In these spots one can walk for half a mile on tree trunks and never touch the earth by ten feet. Ten good men with sharp axes could not cut a mile of trail a day where horses might travel. But from the river all is different, as hour after hour we drift

down the stream. So level is the floor of the valley that the river winds like a serpent for miles, there being one place where it makes such a complete "S" in its course that, while we are travelling north, we actually make a complete bend, so that for half a mile our camp is pointing almost due south up the valley down which we are coming. Again and again, portages of a few hundred yards across narrow tongues of land would save five miles by river. All of this means that when the steel comes, it will have an easy way down the valley, and that for nearly 200 miles after leaving the Cache, it will wend its way northward with a grade that will hardly be perceptible, save to the surveyor and engineer, who have their instruments that show as small a variation as an inch to the mile, and less.

At one point just below Small River, the stream swings across the valley, undermining a great bluff, which has brought the whole floor of the forest, sixty or seventy feet above, sliding down the steep bank into the river. It is from these cuts that one can form an estimate of the richness of the soil, yet it does seem that once the timber wealth has been cleared away from the surface, the soil will have a productiveness that will rival any part of Canada in its fertility. The billions of feet of magnificent timber here has a value which is almost incalculable, but when this has been cleared away and the soil given over to

the general farming, orchards, and what not, it is safe to say that the first decade of cultivation will produce more value than did the timber that has been cut from its surface.

The first night on the river, we camped at Horse Creek, a stream as clear as crystal, that comes in from a cleft in the range of the Rockies. As there were six of us in the boat, we cut our baggage down to the minimum and had not taken a tent, but in this dense jungle we needed none, even though it rained pitchforks, for under the great fir-trees it is as dry as a bone, even during wet weather. Here centuries have been piling up the needles that are shed each year, until in places one can dig down a foot or two in them. After supper each man looked around for some nook, where he might stretch his blankets for the night, and sleep with no fear of being doused by a sudden downpour of rain.

We are up again at daylight and once more on the river. Mile after mile we float down its expanse, now deep-flowing and still as a lake itself. To the east and north of us pour in King Creek and Baker Creek, while from the Selkirk side the big volume of the Rau Shushwap enters the Fraser, draining the big valley that, from the view we get from our boat as we slide past its mouth, heads back among a confusion of snow-caps and glaciers. One more bend in the river, and we

pass another big stream, coming in from just such another valley in the Selkirks, which the boys tell us is the Cottonwood. All of these names, of course, are the ones given these streams by the trappers, for most of them are not on the maps of British Columbia at all, and, again, many have no name.

A few miles below the Cottonwood, the Beaver comes in from the opposite side. And from the river we can see the great "V" in the mountain wall, from whence it winds its way through the giant timber to its union with the Fraser. Just above the mouth of the river, we ran our boat ashore in an eddy and made her fast with ropes. The river bank was trodden down with the coming and going of many feet, and as we climbed up, we saw a well-defined trail running inland, beyond which a turn revealed a small clearing in which there stood a trapper's cabin, built out of clean new bark-stripped logs. It was the little house that the Teare boys and Charlie Keller had built for their base of operations against the quartz ledge, which is five or six miles back up the valley of the Beaver. To wander fifty feet from this clearing was to become hopelessly involved in windfalls, where trees, 100 feet high and two or three feet thick, are piled up like jack-straws. Moss a foot deep and creepers hidden among the ferns make every step forward an exertion.

When the Teares first prospected this valley, they

"All day long the Teares had been telling us of their ideal camp-ground up the Beaver. 'We've a house there like a hotel,' was the way Bill had put it." This is a picture of it.

were two solid days in covering a distance which, in a straight line, is something between four and five miles. If there is a rougher and more impenetrable country in the world, I have never seen it. A few feet from the camp, I stumbled across a white sliver sticking into the moss. On its axe-glazed side were scrawled a few barely legible figures. What was it? Why, one of the location stakes of the survey. Here we were, some 500 miles from Edmonton as we had travelled, and it had taken us seventy-two days to get here, and yet scarcely did we make a jaunt into the woods but sooner or later we stumbled over one of these signs that civilization had marked this valley for her own, for since that time three different lines have been run down the Fraser, but which is to be the final location, I have not yet heard.

After a hasty lunch, with packs on our backs, we struck back into the timber, for the climb up to the ledge on the mountain. Though the distance to be covered was but a scant five or six miles, we were four solid hours ploughing through the brush, falling over logs, and splashing through little streams that seeped through the timber en route to the Fraser. It was noon when we started, and the mosquitoes were hanging about each of us in perfect swarms, which made the advance almost intolerable. Every twenty minutes we would take a few minutes' rest

and make a couple of smudges and sit in the smoke to get away from the insects.

Another delight of the British Columbia wilderness is a creeping vine which, out there, is called Devil Club. The main branch of this vine runs along the ground, sending up shoots six and eight feet high, in a kind of a large leafed bush. The stalks of these are set with thousands of little thorns, as are also the underside of the leaves. To reach out suddenly to prevent one stumbling over the ground creeper, you almost always grasp one of its standing shoots. The thorns are so loosely attached to the plant that they come off in handfuls. The larger ones are easily plucked out, but the smaller ones work in and fester. The first job on camping or sitting down is always to pick out the thorns, for if left in the flesh over night, a most painful inflammation sets in.

Nick Stevens, one of Nature's noblemen.

All along the trail the Teare boys kept singing out that they had a fine camp near the ledge, and that once we reached there we would have an ideal spot to spend the night. At last we came upon it, and if I had not been inured to expecting nothing in the wilderness, I dare say I should have felt somewhat disappointed, for their much boasted camp was

nothing more than a great log with a few great pieces of bark and some cedar slivers stretched over the top. Here we spent the night, without blankets and in the rain. But as no one seemed to consider this anything out of the ordinary, I made no complaint.

The next day we were up at dawn, climbing about over rocks and ledges on the mountain's side, taking an inventory of the property, making maps, etc., and by 3 o'clock we had done what I called a hard day's work ; but after a quick cold lunch, we slung on our packs again, and late that night were in camp once more at the trapper's cabin near the mouth of the river.

The next morning we were on the river once more, bound for the Cache. But this time it was not the easy going that we had experienced coming down, for now we had the long 65-mile stretch to go up-stream, which meant hard strenuous labour every second we were on the river, for to cease work for even a second means to be carried back with the current as much in a minute as we can advance in ten against it. Three men, with long poles, are the propelling force. Of course, the boat follows the shore line closely, where there is bottom for the poles to bite. One man holds the boat in the stream, while the other two with a simultaneous heave send her forward a few feet at a time. Eddies and the stillest water are sought out, and in these places four or five

miles an hour can be made. But then comes a turn in the river and the current is all on our side and we must drop the poles and paddle with might and main for the other shore, often losing hundreds of yards by the enterprise. For a few miles this side will be followed, when another crossing becomes inevitable.

If it were all just this sort of work, there would not be much to it, but every few miles we come to some exceptionally swift water, or perhaps a log jam with a narrow current rushing through it that must be worked up against. In these bad places every man on the boat works until the sweat starts from his body. The poles bend almost double, while the paddles are plied until they fairly crack.

"Now then, fellows, give'r h——," one of the boys will call, and every muscle in the boat strains to its limit, and perhaps five feet are gained. Again we hold her with the poles for a breathing spell and again every nerve is strained, and another few feet are conquered against the whirling river. Perhaps we have been half an hour doing a scant few hundred yards when one of the poles may slip, and the bow, swinging out into the current, spins the boat about, and before she can be brought back to shore all of the vantage gained by the laborious efforts is to be done over again. So swiftly do things happen in bad water that the canoe-men are lucky, indeed, if some such misplaced pole or slippery bottom does not end

the whole enterprise, for to lose control of a boat suddenly in a log jam, or swift water, means that for a minute or two she is at the mercy of rocks and the treacheries of the river. Again, we are working along a sand bar, and one of the men leaps out up to his waist in the cold water and, with line over his shoulder, tows her upstream at a merry pace.

The Teare boys and Charlie Keller could stand in a boat for ten hours a day, in the blistering sunshine or pouring rain, straining and heaving on their poles or dragging their boat with a line, and never turn a hair. When any two of them would get their poles set and heave at once, they would fairly lift the boat out of the water. Every hour or two we would run into a bank and tie up for a few minutes for a short breathing space, and, as it seemed to me, almost before the fire had been lighted to drive off the insects, we would be on our way once more.

It rains a great deal in this country, and in looking back it seems to me that there was a downpour every day and almost every night, but it created scarcely a comment from the men. All day long they would stand in their wet clothes, their hands numb and blue from the cold engendered by the constant handling of their dripping poles ; yet not on this trip nor on any other that I took with them, can I recall even a comment as to there being any dis-

comfort felt on their part. Physical annoyances, which in a city would bring an ambulance, scarcely are mentioned by them.

I recall, one night, as we sat around our camp-fire, asking Bill what they did when they were sick. "Well," he replied reflectively, "can't say we ever are sick. The worst thing that ever happened, I reckon, was when Mort here had a bad tooth; but, after a day or two, we got sick of it and took it out."

"How in the world could you pull a tooth without any instruments?" I asked in amazement.

"Simple enough," he replied, as he pulled at his pipe. "I looked through our dunnage bag and found an old railroad spike. Mort held it against the tooth and I hit the head with a big rock, and knocked her out the first time. War'nt nothing to it at all."

Mort, who had been listening to our conversation, chimed in, "No, that war'nt nothing at all. I don't count that worth mentioning. Bill here had a worse experience than that. He was chopping wood one night, when his axe slipped and chipped off the end of his moccasin as clean as a whistle. I didn't take much notice of it until Bill he picked up the end of the moccasin, and there was two toes in it."

"What in the world could you do for it out here?" I asked in horror.

Bill grinned and said, "Oh, that didn't bother us

none. Just slapped on some chewing tobacco and a bit of spruce gum, and never thought any more about it."

"How long were you laid up?" I asked.

"Laid up for a couple of toes!" they both shouted in a derisive chorus. "We weren't laid up at all."

Bill (with a tone of apology in his voice) ended with saying, "Couldn't travel quite as fast for a day or two, but we didn't lose no time at that, for we travelled longer to make up."

I thought that my old friend, Fred Stevens, was about the limit in casual treatment of his ailments, when he extracted a refractory wisdom tooth with the aid of a jack-knife, but I rather think the Teare boys went him one better with their toe story.

Incidentally, all these men of the mountains pick up as much lore of remedies as fills their needs. For every ailment almost that man is heir to, they have some cure. A bit of weed here, or some berry there, seems to fix them up in fine style. Earlier in our trip, Nick's horse had fallen on him, bruising one of his knees dreadfully, so that it swelled as big as a cabbage. Fred, who had come back to ascertain what the cause of the delay was, laughed, and his only comment was "Gee-whiz! Look at that scratch on my new saddle?" but that night he had a cure ready which took the swelling down in twenty-four hours. A hole a couple of feet deep was dug and

then great rocks, heated in the camp-fire, were tumbled into it and dirt piled in on top. Nick sat on another stone, with his bare knee above the hole. Water was then poured in and a blanket thrown over the member. In two seconds the steam was pouring out of the ground in clouds. The invalid growled in agony while his knee was being parboiled in the vapour, but it did the business just the same. But to return to the Fraser River.

It was late in August, and the river was very low, leaving many bars exposed, and as the salmon were just up, there were hundreds of dead ones drifting downstream. This is a great bear country, and as bears are very fond of salmon, they come down on to the bars in the fall and eat the dead fish. The howls and shouts of the men (not to say oaths) made such a tumult that it could be heard a mile away, but notwithstanding the uproar we made coming up-stream, we saw as many as three bears in one day, while every bar was tracked up by them. Moose, deer and beaver are also plentiful, and we could hear the game making off through the brush, as we rounded some bend in the stream.

We were four days making the trip up the river, and some of the camps on that glorious stream stand out in my memory still. The last one in particular lingers in my dreams, for late in the afternoon the rain had stopped and in the evening, a little moon

sailed out serenely, turning the river to a ribbon of silver. It was a dead quiet night, with not a sound save the occasional call of a loon, soaring far above, and the plash and ripple of the stream, gliding quietly past our camp ground. I sat alone by the current this night, while the boys were asleep, and pondered over the folly of millions of men, who are herded together like cattle, in tenements and dirty streets, while here in this peaceful, serene valley there is hardly a soul to dispute its possession with the game that drink from its pure cold waters. How infinitely better off are my companions and friends, asleep under their blankets around the camp fire, than are their fellows back in the big cities, who are mere slaves to their employers, living each day a dull routine, only that they may eat at night and snatch a few hours' rest to prepare them for the same monotony on the morrow. Week in and week out, the same old pace goes on, with each month and year hurrying them on to old age and incompetence. In their lives is a bare existence, and sentiment and romance are but childish dreams when they are still in their twenties.

But these men, these children of the wilds, what of them? Why, they are kings! This whole glorious West is their Empire. They can roam these valleys and climb these giant peaks with no man to gainsay them. A month of hard work in

town will give them a grub-stake, and the mountains will provide for the rest. In the large centres of population, the penniless man without a job may starve, but out here nature, far, far more kind than man, gives a living to him who is man enough to wrest it from her grasp. The rivers offer fish, the valleys game, while berries and shrubs in the summer help to fill the empty paunch. As Bill Teare once remarked to me, " My capital is my manhood, my time, and my strength. I am investing that now and some day we'll make a strike, and I would rather make my little stake by twenty years spent in the free open air, with no man to call himself my boss, than lay it up penny by penny back in some stifling settlement in the East. We own this country now, and when the steel comes, and it gets too crowded, why then me and Mort can pull out further North, and I guess there's plenty of country up there that will hold us our turn."

It was late the next night, after ten hours on the river (most of it in the rain) that we ran our canoe aground at the Cache. Tom and Nick had some fine big salmon, and once back with our pack-train and grub-pile, we made merry until long past midnight.

CHAPTER XVIII

In which we hit the Trail for Home and meet the Advance Guard of the Army of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad

EIGHT days later, we pulled into the little poplar camp at Swift's. The return trip through the pass was made at full speed, as our supply of provisions was running extremely low. We were laid up two days by a steady downpour of rain, but on the others we travelled as fast and as long as we could drive the horses. The days were getting shorter now, as it was well on in September, and the nights were getting correspondingly colder. Every morning when I woke up my moustache and eyelashes were covered with ice, where my breath and the moisture thereof had congealed, and every daylight saw a heavy frost on grass and tree that looked almost like snow. Barring the two days of rain, the weather was clear and cold, driving away the flies and mosquitoes that had pestered us so before, and so we rarely took the time to pitch our tents, but rolled into our beds in the evening under some old tree or beneath the brush as soon as supper was over. By the time we reached the summit, we

were almost out of all our staples. Coffee, sugar, oatmeal, cornmeal, rice, butter, and in fact practically everything but flour and bacon, beans and tea were gone ; and, though these were perfectly nourishing, we found them somewhat monotonous.

The days on the trail were now often eight and ten

Pack-train in a small river.

hours long, with nothing between breakfast and supper but the berries that grew in profusion along the way. There were thousands of wild rosebuds, which I found not at all too bad to pass the time in munching, and a pint or so of these a day while we were on the march I found to be quite filling and somewhat appetizing when I got used to them, while

the bannock and bacon at supper-time seemed more delectable than all the luxuries had tasted earlier in the trip. Any old food is delicious when one is hungry, but I am not trying to make out that we were in any severe straits, for none of us minded in the least our limited variety of rations. Only we all looked forward to seeing old Swift again and having a taste of his potatoes, fresh vegetables, and a bit of sugar and coffee, for personally I never cared for tea.

The morning of the next day, I hit the trail early and pulled into Swift's place at about noon. The old man was sitting on his stoop, whittling a stick, and drawing lazily at his pipe. He cursed roundly when he heard that we were " busted on our grub-pile," but just as he had done with every other bankrupt prospector and trapper that has drifted his way the last twenty years, he ended up by telling us to go into his cache and take what we wanted. This may not seem a great deal to the reader, who lives around the corner from some grocery or meat market, but when one realizes that every ounce of stuff that we took meant just so much shortage at the end of the winter for the old settler, who was still 200 miles or more from the steel and had barely enough for himself and family, it will be understood just what sort of man Swift is. To " whack up one's grub-pile " in the wilderness means much more than giving

away money in the cities, for with industry money can be replaced, but food in the mountains cannot be replaced in the fall, save by long and arduous trips of weeks to the nearest store on the fringe of civilization miles away. Can you imagine the average man in town giving away half of his bank account on demand ?

No ? Well, neither can I.

But there is not one man of the trail in twenty who will not laughingly give you half of his little food supply, scorning money and thanks, though he well knows that his largess means that he himself will be eating but one meal a day when the end of the summer comes. But that does not bother him unduly, for he never starved yet, and he figures by some means or another to make his food supply hold out until he can get to the settlements himself. More than one prospector has come into the settlements in the fall, having lived exclusively on fresh meat and berries, and smoking kinnikinick (a weed used by the Indians of the North-west as a substitute for the fragrant leaf), because their own supply was given to some poor devil who was harder up than they were. Swift is just this kind, and that is why he's an institution in that country and why everybody loves him. As soon as he saw me and heard my tale of woe, he began to bellow for his wife, who in two minutes was cooking me a bite to eat.

"Guess we'll have to give you a smack of fresh meat, boy," he said genially.

I dare say my mouth dripped expectantly, similar to that phenomenon so often observed in one's good old house dog, who sits eagerly by your side while at dinner, rolling his eyes from side to side, as he watches the movements of your fork from plate to mouth.

"Gee!" I said, "where did you get fresh meat from?" for I knew that the old man had not been much of a hunter in recent years.

"It's the old cow," he replied mournfully. "She was gettin' awful sickly and peaked like, and I calculated I'd kill 'er before she died, as I never did like to eat them unhealthy critters that's died of disease."

Of course, I recalled the animal he referred to, as she was one of two he had possessed. All the time we had camped there before, her condition had been the source of endless arguments between Fred and Nick. She was a very sad cow, with some disease that engendered melancholy, for she used to stand by the hour in profound gloom, even suspending the chewing of her quid for long periods, evidently to think over her unhappy lot. I think she must have had locomotor ataxia, for her hind legs dragged dismally on those few occasions when she lugubriously changed her position from one side of the corral to the other. However, I dismissed her condition

Crossing the Athabasca in an Indian dug-out.

from my mind and, all things considered, found her a most pleasing dish. She had furnished the only fresh meat that Swift could depend on during the long winter; yet, had we let him, he would have given us the whole of one of those draggy legs, but we declined, not because the legs had been draggy, but because we would not rob Swift.

We stopped two days at the little ranch, rounding up the horses that we had "cached" there on our way west. One of them we left there for the winter, for he was sad-eyed and depressed when Fred at last discovered him standing in introspective silence under a bush. He died that fall, so I learned afterwards. I don't know why, but I guess he was sick of the life and it seemed so much simpler to stand under a bush and freeze to death than to hustle around for a bite to eat under the snow. Anyway, he "moved on" when the cold weather came.

Swift offered us an extra horse, and to my amazement volunteered that he had forty. "Where in the world are they?" I asked in surprise. "I have never seen more than half a dozen around here." As usual, he was sitting on his front stoop, peeling the long slivers off a bit of stick with his old jackknife.

"Well, I won't say exactly forty," he replied after a while, "but I calculate there's about that. You see, when I come in here all them years ago, I

A brook in the Rockies where the big trout lurk

had quite a bunch of mares and a pretty good stallion. Well, each fall I figure out about what increase there should be, allowing for accidents and mishaps, and then in the Spring I poke around over the hills and count the new skeletons. By subtracting these from what I figure, I ought to get a pretty good idea of what's left. No, I can't say as I've seen more'n about fifteen, but I calculate the rest of 'em is around the mountains somewhere."

Swift had a little dug-out about eight feet long, and by making innumerable trips back and forth in this, we managed to get our outfit across the Athabasca, and then swam the horses across, as we had done weeks before when we went West. They all crossed in safety, but they were a sad and bedraggled lot as they crawled out on the east bank of the river and stood forlornly in the very shadow of the timber, trying to get a bit of warmth from the last rays of the sun that were just shooting across the valley. It rained hard that night and our tents were blown down three times, which was most annoying, as it is not very pleasant to get out, half dressed, in a pitch black night and stumble around in the pouring rain, trying to get your tent up again. The last time we only cursed and let her stay down, though I must say the wet canvas and a heavy pole across one's back is not any more luxurious than it sounds. The next day our horses all got away and it was noon

before we got started, with everybody sore and disgruntled.

From Swift's place, the trail runs along the east bank of the Athabasca, following close to the river in its sweep northward to where it swells out into a kind of shallow lake, called Jasper Lake. At the foot of this lake the river narrows down again and after a few miles makes a turn to the right and goes through the gap in the mountains called Jasper Pass, and then starts off through foothills and prairies on its long meander, until its waters finally reach the great McKenzie River, the largest of the waterways that flow into the Arctic Ocean. On the west bank of Jasper Lake is the site of the old Jasper House, for many years one of the most important of the frontier trading stations of the Hudson Bay Company, now long since abandoned. Our way leads through the soft ground for a bit, and then through the sand dunes that skirt the shores of Jasper Lake. Several mean streams have to be crossed, the worst being Rocky River, mild enough now in the fall, but a ripper in the freshets, as its rocky bed where it overflows into the timber in all directions can testify. From Rocky River, the trail pierces a few miles of timber, after which we come to the foot of Roche Miette, a great mountain elbow that sticks its great barren wall into the river, above which it rises sheer for hundreds of feet.

We camped for the night at the foot of this mountain, which for years has been a nightmare to the packers, for the horses have to climb up nearly 2,000 feet and then down the same distance, all in a few miles. The trail is one continuous zigzag and switchback up one side, and when the horses above loosen stones and dirt, they come hurtling down past those on the lower reaches, and one becomes a constant target for these deadly missiles. It is hard on the horses, as the way is so steep that they can barely struggle up it.

There is one bad spot along the top, where a mis-step means a plunge down a sheer drop of nearly 1,000 feet into the roaring Athabasca. I have heard the trail described as being particularly hazardous, but it never impressed me that way; for, after all, there is no reason why a horse should fall here, any more than down a 5-foot embankment. The mere fact that the drop is longer is no particular inducement for a horse to come to grief, and as they seldom stumble off a narrow trail, no matter how near they may come to it, I should record it as remarkably hard luck if one lost a horse here, and nothing very notable if he didn't. Anyway, we didn't, nor did we come anywhere near it. At any rate, the scaling of this mountain and the descent on the other side made the beginning of a long, hard day, and when we camped that noon at

the very portals of the mountains, we were all cross and tired. But, after an hour or two of rest and refreshment, we saddled up once more and did not camp until long after dark, at Prairie Creek, where another old timer of the Swift school has been living for many years.

The exit from the mountains is as sudden as putting out to sea from a land-locked harbour. There is a great mountain, which the latter-day pioneers have called Folding Mountain, that guards the entrance. On the prairie side it goes up several thousand feet at a jump, and against its black base the grasses of the prairie break like the gentle plashing of the sea on a smooth day against a rock-bound coast. Just before leaving the mountains, we crossed a stream called Fiddle Creek, up whose valley, some eight or ten miles, are hot springs, which are said to be of medicinal value, and the Grand Trunk Pacific is planning to erect a big, first-class tourist hotel there, where it is thought a second Banff may be developed, though personally, I think Swift's place is the most ideal in the whole valley for a town site or a tourist centre, and doubtless some day it will become such.

The horses showed signs of fatigue after their long day and the climb over the Roche Miette, so we made only a short drive the next day, and camped at about 1 p.m. on the bank of a gurgling brook.

Up to this time, we had seen no sign of man, save

at Prairie Creek, where they had told us that not far ahead we would find the right-of-way gang, cutting a broad swath, 100 feet wide, through the timber, as the first step in advance of the steel. That afternoon we ate up the last of our bacon, and Tom and Sawyer started on a reconnaissance to locate one of the construction camps and buy some more food. They were gone eight hours, but returned with 15 pounds of bacon and a small sack of sugar. Some ten miles ahead, they had met the first thin skirmish line of the railroad builders, who were cutting trees, blasting stumps and shearing off the bushes close to the ground.

Now, with each day of travel, the signs of the advance became more and more emphatic. First, the avenue, 100 feet wide, was encountered, with its surface shaved clean of all vegetation. When the trail crossed it, we could look down the pathway through the forest for miles, with hundreds of fires burning here and there, where the waste was being given to the flames. A long day's drag took us over the Athabasca summit into the basin of its tributary, the McLeod, which joins it to the north. On the McLeod, we met the first gang of the railroad's light artillery; that is, the men who with small ploughs and hand tools were breaking up a way for the wagon road, over which the supplies to feed the construction crews were to be hauled, while the great em-

bankment was in the making. Once we were on the new roughly built wagon road, we met people daily, and every few hours we would pass little mushroom hotels that had sprung up. Into one of these we dropped later in the day for a meal, to save the time and labour of cooking our own. We were surely on the path of the invasion that was aimed at the very heart of the wilderness, and never lacked company those days.

Following down the McLeod, we crossed that river near its junction with Wolf Creek, and here for the first time we struck the end of the grade and a real town, with stores, barber shops, and many other useful buildings. As the pack-train struggled into the little clearing, we all sat on our horses like so many country gawks, watching the small army of men at work with gigantic ploughs and graders of 30 H.P. tearing a great avenue out of a rolling hill-top east of the town, and bringing the heart of the hill out to the head of the grade, which we could see growing before our very eyes. Here the engineers already had the work under way on the piers which were to support the bridge over the McLeod, while a short distance beyond another great trestle was destined to carry the steel across Wolf Creek itself. This trestle is 125 feet high above the river and 652 feet in length, while the McLeod Bridge is 200 feet above the water in the centre and 600 feet long.

It is by such works of the engineers that the famous four-tenths per cent. grade is being obtained. There is no turning aside or flinching here. If there is a deep canyon, what of it? Slap a bridge over it. What matter if it is deep and long, the grade will be saved. Where a hill is encountered, it is a mere detail. Bring on the dynamite gang and watch them blast an avenue through its heart while you wait. From Winnipeg to the Pacific, nothing has turned these beggars of the survey aside. It is lucky for the mountains that there was a pass, otherwise it might be quite within the capacity of the engineers to blow the range to fragments to make one. Back on the prairies, the same thing has been going on. Hills have melted before the advance, and at one place a great steel viaduct over a half-mile long and 184 feet high carries the rails over Battle River.

We had not been travelling along the newly made grade for many miles, before it began to leak through our minds that these people were building a railroad in every sense of the word, and not merely laying ties over the face of the mountains and muskeg. Day after day, we moved eastward down the right-of-way, sometimes, when nobody was looking, travelling on the embankment, and again winding along in the ditch beside it. Every few miles we came upon the railroad camps, where gangs of men were putting in the piling necessary for the frame-

work of the great fills that were scheduled to follow. Trestles first, and then trainloads upon trainloads of earth to follow, when the engine and its family of flat cars could come in, and make the early trestle only a framework in the solid embankment of earth. After our long summer in the mountains, we viewed with awe the casual way in which these armies of the railroad were cleaving their way up hill and down, and across the face of the country. At last, one night as we were travelling down the grade, there was an unfamiliar sound that cut the stillness of the air like a knife. It was the hoot of a distant locomotive, somewhere ahead on the end of the steel.

The next day we were up early and pulled into the little town of Entwhistle, which up to the fall of 1909 was the railhead. Here, in its characteristic fashion, the railroad crosses the Pembina River on a gigantic steel trestle which is 900 feet long, and 214 feet above the bed of the stream which it spans. This little town is 66 miles from Edmonton, and the first thing we see as we come dragging down the main street, with our tired and worn pack-train that has been on the "hike" since spring, is a great locomotive of the consolidated type, sitting on the end of the track, puffing and snorting to itself, as though in great contempt of the primitiveness of its surroundings. It seemed incredible to me to think that within the space of a few months to come,

this same complacent piece of mechanism, or its brothers, would be sitting in just this same self-satisfied way in front of Swift's, at the summit of the Yellowhead, or in fact any of the other far and distant points that to us seemed to be at the end of the earth.

It was nearly the first of October, and already the first few flakes of snow bespoke the coming of an early fall. That afternoon we wrung the hands of both Fred and Nick for the last time (somewhat reluctantly I might say) and a few hours later we were in a caboose, rattling over the newly laid rails which are the connecting link between this far fringe of civilization and every little town on the continent.

We landed at Edmonton late that night. The summer was over, and with it ended my fifth trip into the Rocky Mountains.

CHAPTER XIX

Which contains an Account of a 350-Mile Canoe Trip down the Fraser River, from the Cache to Fort George

EARLY in June of the following year (1910) there was quite a group of us at the old camp at the Cache; viz. Charlie Keller, the Teare Boys, Fred Stevens, E. C. Thurston (a mining engineer who had come in with me from New York to have a look at the country), and myself, besides half a dozen other prospectors and adventurers of the wilderness, thrown out ahead of the steel, like the skirmish line before an invading army. Things this year had been different from conditions in June a year ago. The railhead was already at Wolf Creek, which had become quite a town during the past winter. The wagon road was cut through to the Roche Miette, while the right-of-way gang was almost up to Swift's place. Travelling over the grade, right-of-way, and wagon road, we made the trip into the old settler's ranch in just eight days, as compared with fifty-four the year previous. Already the valley was in the turmoil of activity that surges ahead of a railroad under construction. At Edson, just beyond the

railhead, an elaborate town had been staked out in the brush, which by that fall had received such an impetus that lots, 50 by 150 feet, changed hands at as high as from $2,500 to $3,000 a lot. All along the route were construction camps, stopping places, and gangs of men working on the grade. A ferry was being installed just below Swift's place, and now we could see visitors there daily, whereas a year ago he only had them a couple of times a year. A few miles beyond the old man's ranch, a rock gang were encamped, and the constant roar and crash of dynamite told where they were tearing a great shelf out of the side of the point of rock near which I had nearly come to grief on my raft scarcely ten months before.

Our trail, which had seemed so distinctly our own and so far removed from the activity of the world, now bristled with strange faces. It seemed as though the whole world was pouring in to look over the wilderness that was dissolving before the railroad as rapidly as snow in the sunshine. In the entrance to the pass, a small army of men were cutting down trees and ripping out the side of a hill with gang ploughs, to make a way for the wagon road to cross the Miette, and a few weeks after great teams were passing, toiling through the heart of the mountains with supplies, tools, and a million and one odds and ends that go to feed the cavernous maw of a growing

trans-continental railroad. At the summit of the Yellowhead Pass a cabin had been built, and everywhere were newly felled trees and other signs that the day of the aloofness of the wilderness was past for ever.

As we rode over the summit, I could not but feel a twinge of regret, as I thought that hereafter our beautiful camps would be ours no longer, but open to the whole world. Where there had been a pack-trail last year, and a poor one, this year there was a wagon road, and next would be the highway of steel. The peace and serenity of untrammelled nature had gone already, while a bare few months would hear the hoot of the giant locomotive to startle the eagle from his eyrie among the crags. For untold centuries, no sound but the voices of nature and the occasional tinkle of the pack-train bells have been heard here. But back in far-off Montreal, a quiet gentleman in a frock-coat has sent forth the edict that a highway of Empire shall pierce this range, and forthwith the focus of the world's eye has fallen on this quiet and secluded pass among the mountains, and for centuries to come these great peaks and mountain fastnesses will echo and re-echo with the rumble of the world's traffic roaring through its valleys, on its way from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Beyond the summit, we found things much the same as they were before, for we were close on the

heels of Spring-time and the swarms of sightseers, journalists, tourists and a miscellany of others, encouraged by the ease of access, had not yet arrived in the droves that the next few months saw pouring through the pass. Thurston and myself had already made the trip in dug-outs down to the Beaver and back, looking into the merits of various claims that we were interested in, both in the Fraser valley and its neighbourhood. Our work in the country was over, and we were all at the Cache ready to pull stakes for the settlements once more.

I wish I had the space to mention some of the other boys who were camped with us there. Jimmy Moore, who had been through with the survey, and who was of the same stamp as the Teares, was with us, having cruised down the Fraser with our party, and half a dozen others of the same type were brought together in this small assembly, who were all of the old school of pioneers. And, in passing, let me say that there is a big difference between these men and what I call the "bar-room prospector" that one sees hanging around the frontier towns. There are thousands of this latter class who spend nine months out of the year telling big tales of the new country and the privations they have gone through, until at last some greenhorn is taken in by their glib talk and stakes them to a grub-pile, on the promise of half interest in their finds. Then they go off and camp

in the brush for a couple of months of hunting and fishing, with occasional prospecting rambles, coming in towards fall with greater stories than ever and a few samples of rock that they have picked up.

But one rarely meets this type more than fifty or a hundred miles back from the settlements. After that begins the survival of the fittest, and the further one gets from the settlements, the finer is the class of men encountered. Whenever you see a lonely prospector, four, five, or six hundred miles from the nearest settlement, you can gamble on it that he is a man through to the marrow, for none but such would be here at all ; and if, perchance, you should meet him in town during the few weeks in the spring when he is laying in his grub-pile, you never find him in the bar-room, blowing his own horn. He does not talk of privation and hardship, for he does not recognize their existence. My friends who were in camp at the Cache on this particular June night were decidedly of the type I so admire—quiet, soft-spoken men, who fear nothing, dare everything, and have in their characters the hardness of men of steel and the gentleness of women to those in affliction.

As we were in a hurry to get out of the mountains this year, we decided to let Fred return to Wolf Creek with his pack-train, while we took the river route to Fort George, from whence automobiles over the Caribou Road made a quick return to the

line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad possible. It so happened that the Grand Trunk Pacific had a large, well-equipped canoe lying at the Cache, in charge of one George Williams and a couple of Indians. Through the courtesy of those back in the big office in the East, I had letters, which, when presented to the railroad staff along the trail, proved to be a regular " Open Sesame." As George and his crew were just returning to Fort George, we arranged to go with them in their canoe.

George Williams is an American. When a bad winter put him out of the cattle business in North Dakota, he drifted up into the great New West that the Grand Trunk Pacific is opening up in Canada. In a few years, he won for himself the reputation of being one of the best canoe-men in British Columbia, and a man who can make and hold that reputation on the rivers that rise in the Rockies, and storm through the thousand obstacles that nature has placed between the melting snow that gives them birth, and their outlets in the Pacific, must be a past-master in the art of " white water " navigation. George had been carrying the mails up and down the Skeena River for two years before I met him, taking his chip of a canoe up that river every two weeks, from Rupert to Hazeltine, with letters for the boys of the construction, who were strung out in their camps along the great trans-

cascade waterway. In the winter-time, when the snow and ice sealed up the roaring rapids and dangerous canyons, he was still on the job, but with dogs and toboggans, travelling on the ice when possible, and again breaking trail ahead of his team on snow-shoes through the forest, when the going on the frozen surface of the river was too bad.

When I met him he was making his first trip up the Fraser with a big canoe that he had picked up for the trip from the Hudson Bay Company at Fort George, to which point he had been transferred for the summer from his old stamping ground in the Cascades. This canoe was quite a remarkable craft. Cut from a single cottonwood, she was 42 feet long, with a beam in the middle measuring 40 inches across the gunwales. The whole job had been done with axes and adzes by the Fort George Indians, but so trim were her lines and so beautifully was her hull moulded, that it was impossible to realize that she was really only a dug-out.

The only hitch with these cottonwood craft lies in the fact that they are a trifle too fragile in rocky water. One good clip on a rock, and your boat splits along the grain of wood from end to end in less time than it takes to write this sentence. Such a contingency as this spells annihilation for a man nine times out of ten, for no matter how good a swimmer he may be, he has small chance to display his powers in these

waters, and even without the menace of the rocks which threaten to dash out his brains at every yard of the way, he must soon succumb from the chilling influence of the icy water. And even if he should be able to reach some eddy and drag himself ashore before cramp seizes him, he is little better off, stranded in the wilderness as he is, hundreds of miles from nowhere, with neither food nor outfit to help him fight his way out.

So the men who travel these rivers and survive year after year are the ones that take each rapid with every nerve on the alert and every ounce of strength thrown into the enterprise, for they realize the possibilities far better than the tender-foot, who sits on a heap of blankets and watches the scenery slide past. As a matter-of-fact my own experience in the mountains leads me to believe that one of the surest signs of a greenhorn is the recklessness with which he embarks on swift-water enterprises, which are little understood. The toughest and most fearless men I know are the ones who admit the quickest they "are plumb scared to death of them rippin' rapids and a-bellowin' canyons."

We got an early start from the Cache, and the sun was still beneath the edge of the ranges when we turned loose our "river greyhound" and waved a farewell to the whole camp, that had turned out to see us off, as we slid out into the current and started

down the river. Our two Indians were splendid water men, and with George steering, and them making their paddles crack in the water, we shot through the first log-jam like a toboggan down an ice shoot, and our long 350-mile trip was started.

It was a glorious June day and the sun, soon rising above the range, turned the whole valley into a dream of peace and beauty. Not a sound marred the stillness but the plash of paddles and the wash of the river along the sides of the canoe. After the log-jam, we really had no bad water for a hundred miles or more, and after the hard work of the trail and packing on our backs, it was perfect bliss to lie in the bottom of the canoe and watch the clouds go drifting fleece-like across the heavens. That first day, we ran well below the Beaver River, where the Teare boys had their camp. At noon, we had run ashore in a beautiful park where we cooked our dinner. At six that evening we made another landing for supper and then from 7 to 9 o'clock we turned her loose on the peaceful surface of the waters and let her drift in the silent wilderness, through a scene of beauty that I can never hope to describe. The heavens, filled with the lovely afterglow, threw the mountain walls into shadows as soft and impenetrable as blankets of black velvet. The great forests seemed like an army of spectres, crowding to the river's brink, while the great ribbon of water, like a

grey mirror, wound its barely murmuring way among the dense and primeval jungle that hemmed us in.

As the daylight faded, the stars began to glimmer one by one in the softly dying blues and deep purples of the heavens. But of all the beauties the greatest is the quiet that pervades this wilderness,—a silence that fairly stands out in contrast with the little noises of the river, the slop-slop-slop of some sweeper plunging gently up and down with the suction of the water, with now and then the tumultuous and busy clamour of some little brooklet which pours its trifling volume into the great stream with much rippling and bustling over rocks, only to have its waters silenced for ever by the great slow-flowing river that swallows it up in a single gulp and digests the clearness of its contents in a few hundred yards of distance travelled. The Indians too break the stillness with their weird and uncanny cries and their sudden imitations of the sounds of the forest. Pius, especially, is an adept in calling the moose and the wild geese, or in imitating the noise of the trees and running water.

We remained on the river until the trees melted into the blackness of the heavens above, and then we went ashore in an eddy, where we tied up for the night. In two minutes a great camp-fire was roaring and our hasty shelter thrown up, after which we turned in. And so one may travel for nearly four

Typical mountain scenery in the Canadian Rockies.

hundred miles. Each of these days and the nights that followed, come back to my mind now, steeped in a beauty and peaceful serenity that it is hopeless to attempt to describe on paper. I can only say that the man who has never thus atuned himself to nature, with his whole soul and fibre alive to the wonder of it all,—this great silent world just as it was when God first made it,—the man who has never felt the magnetic mood of the untrammelled wilderness, alone and at night, hundreds of miles from his species, that man, I say, has never experienced one of the rarest treats that this life affords.

The second day we were up and on the river at five in the morning, and for twelve ideal hours we were carried on our sight-seeing tour by the Fraser through this endless sea of magnificent timber, as fine as any I have ever seen anywhere. Late that afternoon, as we swung around a bend in the river, I saw a slight movement on a bar just on the edge of the timber, some 400 yards ahead. The daylight was already fading, and barring that it was some large denizen of the wilds, we knew not what it was. Pius, who was steering, spotted the dusky movement a moment later. A whisper ran through the boat, and the next instant we drifted down the current without a sound. When we were about 200 yards away, the shape loomed clear.

It was a moose. With one quick sweep of the paddle, Pius brought the canoe broadside to the animal, which for a second gazed at us in wonder and then turned to walk away in dignity to the forest side. But the bullet was quicker than he. Three of us fired at once, and without a murmur the moose sank slowly to his knees, just as though he were going to lie down, and when we ran alongside him in the boat, he was already dead. We threw a lariat rope over his head and towed him across the river to a more favourable camp ground, and in ten minutes his liver was trembling in the frying-pan, for we had not tasted fresh meat these many days.

The Indians are adept at cutting up meat, as was George, and the way they fell on that carcass would have been an object lesson to many a butcher. Their hunting knives flashed here and there, severing strategic muscles and joints, while hind legs cracked and spinal column snapped and creaked under their onslaught, with the result that in thirty minutes there was nothing but a mere skeleton left of the graceful bull moose that an hour before had come down in the pride of his youth to take his evening drink from the Fraser. But we needed the meat and felt no particular regret on his account.

After we had gorged ourselves, we again took to the river, and just before dark passed the mouth of the Goat River that comes in from the south and

west, and then dropped our craft down the half-mile water stairway of Goat Rapids. These rapids might have been bad in low water, but the Fraser was in flood that night and we slid through the few thousand feet of tumult and white water without a bit of trouble. The main thing in rapids is to have full speed on your craft, so as to give the man in the stern plenty of steerage way to keep her off the rocks. So every one works to the limit in the rapids, which are very interesting. The Indians become greatly excited and keep screaming " Hudson Bay," " Hudson Bay," which seems to be the equivalent of the white man's war-cry in rapids of " Give her h——, boys, give her h——" We ran ashore just below the rapids and made our beds for the night.

Another long day on the river brought us into an even wilder country than before, where there were nothing but rivers, mountains and trees, rivers, mountains and trees, all the day through. For a couple of hundred miles through here is the greatest game country I have even seen or imagined. Every evening we could see a moose or two while scarcely an hour of the day passed that we did not surprise a beaver or an otter, or some kind of game swimming the river. Along in the afternoon, Pius, whose restless eyes caught the slightest move in brush or in the water, whispered to me, " Look, look.

Little bear, he swim river." Sure enough, there was something brown and furry paddling for dear life across our bow, a hundred yards ahead, the long ripples making a wedge in the still water behind him. I grabbed my rifle, and with the first shot cut off his lower jaw, so that he filled with water and would have sunk, had we not run up to the blood-stained surface of the water and dragged him into the canoe. But it turned out to be a wolverine. I felt very sorry, for we all abhorred the wanton sacrifice of the little friends of the forests. An hour later we chased two otters swimming the river, while just before dusk we actually caught a baby moose in the water and tied it up to the bank while we took its picture. And so it was every day. Not an evening passed but we would send our canoe gliding so near a mother moose standing mild-eyed in the water that we could splash the spray on her with our paddles. The Indians would yell with delight, while for five minutes we could hear the brush crack as the terrified animal made off through the jungle.

That night we camped just above the mouth of the Big Smokey, a river that comes in from the East. The place where we made our camp was so trampled down by moose that it looked like a cow pasture. This was another night to dream of. It had rained during the day, but had cleared up late in the after-

noon, and the sun was setting in a blaze of orange, crimson and golden hues that turned the heavens to the colour of molten steel. These sunsets on the river I can never forget, but I daresay to the reader they are somewhat draggy, so I will try to omit them in the future.

At noon the next day we were at the Grand Canyon of the Fraser, which is the *pièce de résistance* of the contortions that the mighty river has up its watery sleeve. Just above the canyon, we found some of the government surveyors in camp, for the anticipation of the coming of the steel and a flood of settlers had started the government spending thousands of dollars that the new country might be neatly blocked off and ticketed on the government maps, so that each man might know the legal description of the place he called his homestead. The canyon itself is in two sections, the first of which is a sharp drop like the slope of a log shute, where the stream flows as smooth as velvet down a hill of solid rock, at the bottom of which there are a lot of jagged rocks that whip the water into spray. After that comes a bend so sharp that the water is churned into white froth, emerging from which the canoe shoots into a dead-still pool. Pius took the canoe through empty to the still water, which to all intents had the appearance of a large lake about a mile across from which there was no egress in any direc-

tion. So dead was the water that we had to paddle across it. When about half-way over, the noise and tumult ahead began to increase as that in the rear faded from our ears, and then around a bluff in one corner we saw white water rushing between two great walls of rock. The only danger here is from the current itself, as the depth is infinite and there are no boulders to rip a canoe up with their jagged teeth.

A few miles from this place, so the engineers told us, the Fraser was half a mile wide and so deep that a 10-foot pole could not touch bottom. Yet here it narrowed down to a width that certainly did not exceed 50 to 75 yards across, so without further elaboration, it may be stated right here that there was some water going through. This place, too, had a curve in it, and I should say the current was going fully 15 miles an hour. For a moment we hung at the entrance, and then the current caught us with the suddenness with which a piece of machinery starts when the belt is suddenly thrown on. I don't suppose the distance through this defile exceeds a mile or so, and we were through it in a few minutes, but it was certainly a boily, tumbly place while it lasted.

The great danger, and in fact the only one, is from the boils and eddies created by the vast quantity of water surging through this narrow crack. Every instant great vortexes would form,

sucking the water down into great eddies fifteen or twenty feet deep and eight or ten feet across at the top. The next moment these would fill and the water, in a whirling mass, would be forced three or four feet above the surface in a great " boil," as it is called out there. The whole looked a good deal like the wake one sees, standing at the stern of the *Lusitania,* or some other ocean flyer. The main thing, of course, is to keep from going into the eddies and being capsized by the boils. I should say that when the river was at its highest, it would be something of a trick, but we had no trouble at all, and it was not near as bad a place as I had been led to believe, though the Indians swear that in the freshets, when the greatest volume of water is going through, trees, 70 feet in length, that come down the Fraser are sucked clear out of sight in the eddies. But with our long canoe and all of us paddling our uttermost, we sped through undamaged and were drifting again on the smooth surface of the river.

As we were in a hurry to get to Fort George, we ran on nearly all night, until in fact the roar of the rapids ahead told us that we were coming to the Giscombe Rapids, which some writer has called " fifteen miles of death." I knew nothing about the place, and George had only been there once, so we tied up as soon as we heard the tumult, and awaited the coming of daylight, when we found that

we were just exactly at Giscombe Portage, where a fur trader has a cabin. From this point there is a trail cut, a few miles through the woods, to Summit Lake, which is over the divide that separates the basin of the Fraser from that of the Peace. This lake is the head of Crooked River, which in turn feeds the Parsnip, also one of the heads of the Peace River. There are a couple of old wheel trucks here and, if one desires, it is a simple proposition to portage a canoe over this short stretch through the timber and put her into the water again at Summit Lake, from where, I am informed, one can run down into the great river itself.

After having breakfast here, we again took to our canoe and made the run over the Giscombe Rapids. I can very well see why they might be bad to navigate, for half-way down it is necessary to cross the entire breadth of the river, to keep away from the rocks which are pretty well scattered along this stretch. There have been quite a number of accidents in this place, I believe, and a lot of poor devils are said to have been drowned here. But, like the other places of bad repute, they were in docile mood when we went through. I think, myself, that the greatest of all dangers that can confront the skilled man in the rapids, is to have his paddle break or his pole slip when coming up stream. In either event, one is riding on a gigantic force, and if

control is lost for even the fraction of a second, the unfortunate occupant of a canoe is absolutely at the mercy of the swift current and the hideous rocks.

We camped again along in the middle of the morning, and in the shadow of a beautiful cotton-wood grove we cooked our lunch, and then lay about for half an hour, talking over the trip and smoking our pipes. The next time we boarded our craft, it was for the home-stretch to Fort George. The only thing of interest between our camping place and the new metropolis was the Willow Rapids. I cannot give much of a description of these, as I was asleep in the bottom of the boat when we went through them. Just below the rapids we saw another moose, the nineteenth in three days, and then came a long stretch in the river and a big bend, around which was Fort George. A few minutes later we were ashore and making our way up the bank to the old Hudson Bay post and store, which stood by the river's brink.

Our canoe trip was over. We had made the 350 miles (George claims it is 425, but I am sure I don't know myself) from the Cache in just four and one-half days, clipping off the last 106 miles in twenty-three hours. George said it was the record time from the Cache, and perhaps it was. It was certainly the most beautiful trip I have ever taken in any part of the world.

CHAPTER XX

Fort George—the Biggest Little Town in America

FORT GEORGE struck me as about the most remarkable place that I have ever seen. It reminded me a good deal of a sky-scraper in the early days of its construction, when one can stand across the street and see the framework of a fifty-story building, before the contractors have even built the floor over the basement and the brickwork has not yet reached the first story. Well, that is what Fort George resembled the first time I saw it. A half a dozen town sites were laid out between the Fraser and its tributary, the Nechaco, which, flowing in from the north, makes a wedge of land between the two rivers. Besides the various town sites, there were additions galore, with streets and avenues neatly laid out in every direction. In a word, the framework was there for a town of 40,000 or 50,000 population, and lots were selling anywhere from $200 to $1,600 each, notwithstanding the fact that it took an expert with a map as a key for the public, to show a man in just what part of the jungle his belongings lay. Every other shack was a real

estate office, and the most gorgeous pictures of Fort George, with this, that and the other additions prominently displayed, were hung up on every hand.

When one looked at these products of the townsiter's imagination, it was to gasp with wonder. The water front was pictured crowded with steamers, while all sorts of prospective buildings were lining the various streets, and the thoroughfares were crowded with traffic. To appreciate the incongruity of the whole situation, it must be realized that Fort George was at that time 318 miles from the nearest railroad station at Ashcroft, on the Canadian Pacific, and some 90 miles from the nearest wagon road at Quesnelle. Yet "the coming of the steel," those magic words, had suddenly laid the foundation of a metropolis in the very heart of a wilderness, which, heretofore, had been about the most inaccessible place on the map. Yet it is all not so impossible as it seems, for all things considered, the future of Fort George, taken as a whole, is founded on a rock, and when the Grand Trunk Pacific finally gets there, the dreams of the pioneers must certainly be translated into a reality, for the old Hudson Bay post has a location which is strategic in its relation to interior British Columbia.

The country here breaks away, and the Selkirk Range, before mentioned, fades gradually away, while the Rockies, sweeping to the north-east, form the

eastern wall of a great inter-mountain plateau, which extends for three or four hundred miles to the Cascade Mountains. Fort George, lying complacently in the very hub of the waterway system, must sooner or later become the commercial centre of this whole region, and in ten years, or less perhaps, is certain to be the most important city between Edmonton and Prince Rupert. The Fraser forms a means of water transportation from Soda Creek, 163 miles below, to the group of town sites, and from Soda Creek there is an excellent wagon road to Ashcroft, 155 miles south. Shallow draft steamers can run, though with great difficulty, from Soda Creek to Fort George, while one steamer has actually made the trip from the Hudson Bay post to the Cache itself, thus giving 470 miles of potential waterway on the Fraser.

These expeditions, which are now slow and hazardous, may be looked upon as ultimately becoming comparatively simple, when the bad places in the rapids and canyons are blasted out and navigation is made surer and safer. From Fort George, in a similar manner, steamers can go up the Nechaco, a distance of 120 miles, to Fort Fraser, which is another Hudson Bay landmark, while Stuart Lake, up a branch of the Nechaco and 139 miles distant from Fort George, is in a like manner accessible. Thus, even without the Grand Trunk

Pacific, the Fraser gives the little town at the start 750 miles of navigable river, and places it within touch of hundreds of thousands of acres of splendid land, not to speak of the millions of acres of magnificent timber.

The new railroad is to cross the river here and a divisional point is to be established, while a projected line is spoken of to extend from Fort George to Vancouver, down the Fraser valley, and there seems but little doubt that the first railroad that pierces the Peace River Pass will swing down this same valley. And so, even the most unprejudiced witness, with no interests whatever, save fairness and accuracy, must pronounce the skeleton town to be justified by its projectors in just the same way that the steel outline of the sky-scraper has long since ceased to be a wonder to us.

The world nowadays grows apace and immigration no longer comes in prairie schooners, but is dumped in the new countries by unlimited trainloads. Where the country surrounding a town site has the potentialities of great resource, and there is a *raison d'État* for it, then that town is as sure of success as is the sky-scraper sure of walls and tenants to occupy it. The three places from Edmonton west that struck me as sure thing propositions were the Cache, Fort George and Prince Rupert ; and, as it seems to me, nothing but some great national cala-

mity or universal bankruptcy can prick the future of these three places on the new map of Canada, which Mr. Hays has sketched out in his office at Montreal.

It may be that land values in the new town are at present in advance of their intrinsic merit, but a few years will bring the values up to the prices to which boomers have raised them now. The townsiters' maps seemed ridiculous fabrications of the imagination at first blush, but who that has seen Edmonton, Calgary and Saskatoon leap from struggling villages to full-fledged cities, almost overnight, can doubt that a similar future is destined for Fort George? Edmonton, with its vast potential Empire in the Peace River country, seems to me to enjoy the best location strategically in Western Canada, but next to Edmonton, in my judgment, comes Fort George; for with the coming of a line of railroad through the Peace River gap, the latter will push Edmonton for the privilege of supplying that great belt with all its needs. And next to these two, inevitably comes the Tête Jaune Cache, which, with its lines north, south and east, must be the distributing centre for the great mineral and timber belt in the heart of which it lies like a beneficent spider in the centre of his web.

However, when we drifted up to the post in June, 1910, there was little indication of any such future. As Thurston remarked, rather aptly, "This place

reminds me of those old prints one sees of 'Manhattan Island in 1635,' or 'Father Hennepin at St. Anthony Falls in 1680.'" Some enterprising citizen had put in a saw mill, which was whining away all day long, to the pathetic screeches of the logs that ran under its saws, to come out as sweet-smelling building planks, and the transition from tents to frame houses was just commencing. Stores, shops, and banks were already hanging out their signs, the paraphernalia of the latter all coming in on the backs of pack-horses. River navigation to Soda Creek was nominally in force, but the day I was there all of the boats were laid up somewhere down the river, undergoing repairs, for there are two or three dangerous rapids and canyons below Fort George that have not yet been doctored to the extent of making navigation easy. Everything that came in that year had to come by wagon road from Ashcroft to Soda Creek, and from there up the river. When the boats were out of commission, as they usually were, then the route of travel was by wagon road to Quesnelle, and thence 90 miles by pack-train to Fort George. Later that year, I believe the wagon road replaced the pack-trail, while a telephone and telegraph line supplied the link of communication which was conspicuous by its absence when we were there.

Thurston and I planned to return to Ashcroft and

back East at once, and had the boat been there as she was scheduled to be, I dare say we would have left that day. A few hours after we had arrived, however, George Williams came in to say that the Grand Trunk pack-outfit would start the next day for the 300 odd miles of travel to the head of the Skeena

A typical snow-cap as seen from the trail.

River, and urged me to join them. He assured me that I could get a steamer from Haseltine down the Skeena to Prince Rupert, or just plain Rupert as it is familiarly called out there, and from thence steamers went to Vancouver almost every day. But I was obdurate and went to bed that night, firmly determined to take the boat south the next day, but when morning came, there was no sign of the river steamer at all. Again George beguiled me with

tales of the beauties of the Western trail and of the Skeena River, but in spite of all that, and even more alluring descriptions of fat pack-horses and a fine grub-pile, I would not be shaken.

About eleven that same morning, as I was writing in my diary on the old Hudson Bay post table, I heard a little tinkle, tinkle, tinkle outside the old log shack. I stopped writing for a moment and my glance travelled beyond the picket fence to the main street of the town, beyond which the Fraser glistened in the summer sunshine. It was a string of twenty-six fat sleek pack-horses moving down the river bank to the Grand Trunk Pacific Corral, while in their rear rode a rough-and-ready individual with a lariat and a slouch hat, whose picturesque language floated through the open window. It was too much for me, and an hour later I was again in the rear of a pack-train, strung out on the long trail that leads across the great plateau between the Rockies and the Cascades. Thurston looked at me sadly, but he was not to be seduced. The subtle call of the pack-train had not yet become to him the impelling force that it was for me. And so I left him, waiting patiently for the arrival of the steamer, while I gave my heart and hand to the twenty-six cayuses and the four packers that were of our party, Westward Bound.

CHAPTER XXI

The Garden of Plenty of Interior British Columbia

FROM Fort George to Haseltine, on the upper waters of the Skeena River, is about 400 miles as the trail runs, though the steel will make it in a little less, or about 380 miles. As I only passed through this country on this one trip, and as we were travelling as rapidly as possible, I shall avoid details in discussion of the same, as what information I acquired in such a brief journey was, of course, extremely superficial. No one, however, could travel through this particular belt of interior British Columbia without forming the general conclusion that the Grand Trunk Pacific will open up an enormous zone of new Empire, which should make this bit of road through here a freight payer from the start. It seems almost incredible that in the rush for new acres and the mania for throwing new territory into cultivation that has swept this continent the last decades, this great northern mountain plateau has been left so long locked up from the outer world for lack of transportation.

The route that the new line takes, in a rough way,

from Fort George is in a direction slightly north of west, as it follows up the fertile valley of the limpid Nechaco River. This stream it crosses at the mouth of Fraser Lake and then, swinging north-west, journeys along the bank of the Endaka River, from whence, travelling a little west of north, it follows a small stream called the Doe Creek, up to where it crosses the Bulkley summit, in which valley it remains until Haseltine is reached, at the junction of the Bulkley River and the Skeena.

This country falls into two distinct divisions, the one from Fort George to the crossing of the Bulkley summit has an altitude of 2,366 feet, and the other is the very rich and fertile valley of the Bulkley itself. The first stretch lies through a gently undulating country, which for the most part is well covered with a light growth of poplar, birch, and occasional patches of jack-pine. Through this are scattered innumerable parks, knee-deep in a wealth of horse-feed, while from Stony Creek, 66 miles west of Fort George, to the summit is an almost unbroken line of beautiful lakes, past which the survey runs. Once this land is cleared of the trees, it should prove a veritable garden of plenty, with the exception of the jack-pine patches, which are rather sandy in soil and which probably will never be very productive.

The first day's drive on the trail brought us from

Fort George to Mud River, which despite what the name implies is a beautiful tributary of the Nechaco. I was not much impressed with this first 20 miles out of Fort George, as there was much jack-pine and the vegetation and growth was so deep that it will cost a great deal to clear it for farming purposes; though, notwithstanding this, I believe most of this land has already been sold for this purpose. In fact, I think there has been no question as to the misrepresentation of a large portion of this country, for which distant and trusting purchasers have paid anywhere from $10 to $15 an acre for lands that are worthless. It seems a pity that this should have happened, when there are hundreds of thousands of acres of land which are well worth while, and which, under cultivation, sooner or later will blossom like the proverbial rose. I believe it has been estimated that there are 300,000 acres of fine land in the Nechaco valley alone, and I do not doubt it, but it is not good solid land by any means, and parties who figure on investing there should certainly see their lands before they give up a dollar.

The first lake that is reached is Tsinkut Lake, on which is situated the post office of Stony Creek, and where the Fort George trail strikes the Telegraph Trail. Here one encounters one of those great contrasts that is often the case in the wilderness, for this is the line of the telegraph from Vancouver,

Ashcroft and civilization, to Dawson City, in Alaska. It appears that as far back as 1867, a party by the name of Le Barge conceived a most gigantic idea. The future of the Atlantic Cable was still unassured, and this man Le Barge, believing that it never could be made operative, under the vast stretch of the Atlantic Ocean, worked out in his mind an alternative. He proposed to build a telegraph line through Canada up to Alaska, which was to be connected by a short cable under Behring Straits; where another telegraph line was to be built that would stretch clear across Northern Siberia into Russia, where connection was to be made with the European system. His idea was plausible enough to get him sufficient backing to launch it on its way, and he and his single wire had actually reached Telegraph Creek, 800 miles from Vancouver, before his plan was knocked out by the announcement that the Atlantic Cable was in permanent working order. So he and his little band dropped their work and the project evaporated. For thirty-three years, the trail they had been cutting was deserted until in 1900 the stampede to the Alaskan Gold Fields reawaken d interest in an overland telegraph, and the line started in 1867 was actually pushed through to Dawson City in Alaska.

From Ashcroft this telegraph line follows up the Caribou road, swinging off at Quesnelle, and then strikes straight across the country to the Skeena

River, and thence north to Dawson. For miles and miles, this single strand of wire is looped through the forest, and is brought down, every 60 miles, into a telegraph station, where two men live, one an operator and the other a lineman, whose duty it is to poke up and down his beat of 30 miles each way and repair wire trouble. We came out on this old trail, after nearly fifty days of isolation from the world. There was nothing but the single strand of wire strung on trees and makeshift poles, to mar the desolation of that part of the wilderness. Turning a corner, one comes on Tsinkut Lake, and here, nestled off under some trees, is a little log cabin. Riding up to it, one hears the tick-tick-tick—tick-tick of the busy little instrument that all day long is gossiping of the world's news. And yet here we were some 400 miles from the railroad.

Just beyond the lake is still another, called Noolki Lake. Both are gems of beauty set in the rolling poplar country. At Fort Fraser is another lake still, and even more beautiful than the first two encountered. This is Fraser Lake, and on its bank is one of the oldest of the Hudson Bay posts, while near by is quite a thriving Indian village. Due north of Fraser Lake is Stuart Lake, which is said to be a beautiful body of water, surrounded by magnificent timber. In a westerly direction from Fraser Lake is Lake François, around which, as far as I could

learn from the men whom I met on the trail, is the most fertile and easily cultivated farming land in this district.

Following up the Endaka River, we pass two more lakes, Burns and Decker, in the order named. The country through here is all about the same, and already farmers were pouring in to take advantage of the low prices of land that were available, on account of the distance from the steel. But these early pioneers, who have endured the discomforts of breaking ground, hundreds of miles from railhead, will reap their rewards when the line of the construction finally gets there, for they will at once realize an enormous increase on the value of their holdings as well as have a ready market for their produce.

After following Doe Creek through a perfect park of a valley, we crossed the summit of the Bulkley, and striking the head of the stream of the same name, we followed it down to its mouth at Haseltine, where it empties into the Skeena, as mentioned before. The first telegraph station over the summit was called North Bulkley. I rode up to it ahead of the pack-train, but found the door locked, and on it a note posted that read, " Down in the garden at work. Home after six." Through the window I could see a rough room, but the walls were covered with pictures taken from illustrated magazines,

while a number of musical instruments hung against the wall. While I was peaking through the window, the operator came in. I asked him for news, and he threw across the table a file of all the press messages that had gone through to Dawson City for the thirty days past. I found that he was an old Associated Press operator, who had handled Press stuff in nearly every large city in the United States for the previous twenty-five years. We spent a charming evening together, and I gave him a box of cartridges when we left. These boys only get their supplies once a year, when the pack-train pulls through from Ashcroft to Dawson City. Their life is not so bad now, for the " coming of the steel " has started the first flow of tourists over the survey, and so visitors are reasonably frequent.

Along in here, I met an Englishman, who was travelling through the country with two pack-horses and who was an extremely tough-looking packer. The gentleman from abroad had all the make-up of the West, with gun, chaps, sombrero, and all the rest of it. He rode into our camp just as though we would not see through his get-up at the first glance. If we had needed any tip to make sure that he was the greenest ever, his packer (keeper would be a better form) was there to give it. While the tourist talked to us ponderously, the packer stood behind his back, and with a wink and grin jerked his thumb

in the direction of his employer, as much as to say, "What do you think of it?"

"This is a magnificent country, my friends," the traveller volunteered.

"Yes, so it is," we agreed.

"What I like best of all," continued our visitor, unaware, of course, of his packer, who was mimicking him behind his back, "is the great mining opportunities."

"So?" we said. "Well, what does a feller have to give for a mine out in this neck of the woods?"

"Well," he replied after mature deliberation, "I would say that a man should be able to purchase a very little mine for $2,500. In fact, I myself have just made such an investment."

He never knew why we laughed. Perhaps he will when he comes to think it over back in the old country.

The Bulkley valley struck me as being about the best of all. It is, of course, an older country and more thickly settled with signs of prosperity on every hand. The first real town along here is Aldermere, which is fighting in rivalry with Telqua, another town site about a quarter of a mile away. Here we ran into a number of prospectors and promoters, whom we found, from this point on, under every bush. There is no question but that the mountains, that

begin again at this point, are richly laden with mineral of all varieties, and large quantities of coal are already being projected and surveyed, with a view to opening extensive mines when the road gets there. From Aldermere to Haseltine is about 60 miles, all of which is through a mountainous country, the Cascades lying to the west and the Babine range to the east. The line of the railroad follows closely the line of the river, although the survey toward Haseltine runs well up the sides of the hills to keep the grade, for the little Bulkley River is steadily eating its way down into the valley and passes through a veritable gorge just before it reaches the Skeena River. The steel does not touch the old town of Haseltine, but swings a little south, to where it is to cross the Skeena River on a giant steel bridge, which even now the engineers are labouring over.

The last day of travel, George and I took our saddle-horses and made a 34-mile drive through to Haseltine, which has frequent connexions by river steamers with Prince Rupert. And here I took my leave of George Williams, the twenty-six horses and the trail, and embarking on one of the Hudson Bay Company's steamers, made the trip to the new terminus of the Grand Trunk Pacific in twenty-four hours.

The Skeena River is about the wildest place for a steamboat that I have ever seen, and the river cap-

tains make the boast that it is the swiftest navigable river in the world. Nearly all of the way from Haseltine for 100 miles or more it is continuous rapids and canyons, while the lower part of the river resembles a Norwegian fjord more than anything to which I can compare it, for, standing on the deck of a steamer, it is impossible to see how the river gets around the great mountains that rise up seven and eight thousand feet in every direction.

The last stretch into Rupert represents the most remarkable enterprise on the part of the railroad builders. For sixty miles a shelf for the steel is blasted out of the solid rock. It is said that 2,000,000 shots of dynamite were exploded on this piece alone, while the 188 miles from Rupert to Haseltine will cost the company more than 8,000,000 dollars before the steel is laid. But it will be worth it, for the last lap of this great railroad pierces these rugged Cascades, which have been regarded heretofore as impregnable, with its grade below the four-tenths of one per cent., in accordance with the orders of Charles M. Hays. From Rupert, for the first 60 miles, there is a rise of something like 20 feet, which figures out about 3 inches to the mile. This stretch of steel is without doubt one of the most heroic bits of railroad work ever done on this continent, for none but a man of imagination could ever have run the survey up this river, and none but one of grim and iron determina-

tion could ever have pushed the construction through such innumerable difficulties.

Prince Rupert has an ideal deep-water harbour, and is destined to become one of the great ports of the Pacific Ocean, when the long way of steel, which is to link the Atlantic Ocean with the waters of the Pacific is finally completed.

CHAPTER XXII

Prince Rupert—Conclusion

PRINCE RUPERT itself is a remarkable town, and in a few more years is destined to be still more so. With the exception of an Indian village, there was nothing there four years ago, save the primeval jungle. To-day, with the completion of the railroad still two years distant, there is a population of more than 5,000 inhabitants. When the first train pulls in from the Atlantic Coast, there will undoubtedly be twice that number, and it is by no means improbable that a decade hence will see 50,000 persons settled on the spot that but yesterday was as remote from civilization and its activities as the heart of Alaska itself.

There is no question but that the great oriental trade from Europe, and especially England, will seek this route ; for, being 500 miles north of Vancouver, anywhere from one to three days will be saved in the journey to Japan and China. The mails, that feel the differentiation of even a few hours saved, in hurrying them to their destination, will certainly follow this route, and the way of the mails quickly

develops into the highway of the tourist and freight besides. The low grades and economy of operations of the Grand Trunk Pacific are certain to bring vast traffic via Rupert, and when the Panama Canal is finally opened half of the interior of Canada will be sending its harvests to England via these new trade routes. The saving in the rates will increase the price paid to the farmers for their golden products, which will automatically throw into cultivation millions of acres of arable land that are now only a potential factor in the Dominion of Canada. From the very first, there will be a heavy eastbound traffic of lumber from the Fraser River country to the treeless prairies. The necessity of backloading these cars will undoubtedly bring about a westbound freight rate on grains that will start the harvests of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and perhaps even Manitoba, toward the Pacific. The great inter-mountain plateau, with its possibilities of varied farming, will gradually grow into a veritable Garden of Eden, with traffic both east and west, while the mineral developments are certain to bring capital into the country and with it thousands of young men, eager to make a stake in the New Empire of the West. The great fisheries on the coast of British Columbia will find their eastern outlet this way, as will the scores of other industries that the opening of the new country is bound to bring to life. Lines of

steamers from all over the world will make their Pacific terminal at Rupert, whose harbour is absolutely land-locked and one of the most beautiful in the world. As before suggested in these pages, the completion of this railroad will have an influence on economic and industrial Canada that even the most profound student cannot yet foresee and analyse. An ultimate branch is planned to go from some point on the main line, between the 127th and 129th degree of longitude to Dawson, in Alaska, which will make this system the great highway from the United States to her far-off and isolated territory.

It is beyond the province of this book to go into all of the fascinating problems of economics involved by this new route and its several proposed branches, but when a cent or less in rates per unit shipped determines the direction in which traffic flows, the absolute revolution in trade routes that is bound to follow the establishment of this new low grade and cheaply operable railroad can readily be imagined. When connected with the parent company, The Grand Trunk, and when the proposed branch lines are completed, the Grand Trunk will control more than 16,000 miles of railroad, which system, since its new incorporation, is to be called "The National Transcontinental Railway," and the dreams of Mr. Hays in taking the traffic that originates on the thousand and one side-tracks of the Transcontinental

Railway, in old Canada, and hauling it through to its destination in the most remote quarters of Pacific Canada, will be realized.

The task that was ridiculed as a dream a decade ago, will then be hailed as the greatest benefit to Canada that has come to her since she has been a nation, and the name of Charles Melville Hays will go down in the history of events as one of the foremost factors in the making of her richest Empire.

My book is finished.

If I have succeeded in giving the reader who has had the patience to follow the trail of these pages to their conclusion new impressions about this vast new Empire of Western Canada—if I have even in a feeble way brought to his realization a little of the atmosphere of the life of the wilderness, and of the character of the men, both tender-feet and trappers, who lead it, then my task will not have been in vain, and my work is more than repaid.

And, even as I draw these pages to their conclusion, the coming of the Springtime is in the air, and letters from my friends of the mountains are drifting in, redolent of sleek pack-horses, canoes waiting in the giant rivers, and new trails to break in the wilderness that has not yet felt the quick advance of the steel, now being driven deeper and deeper into those wilds with the passing of each day. My mind

is already turning to the country of my dreams, and if all goes well, by the time these pages reach the printer's hands, Fred Stevens and myself will be well down the turbulent waters of the old Fraser, poking into the lair of certain grizzly bears that he knows about, with the roar of the river, unlocked from Winter's grasp, as our lullaby while we sleep with the blue canopy of heaven overhead and a foot of pine needles for our couch.

THE END

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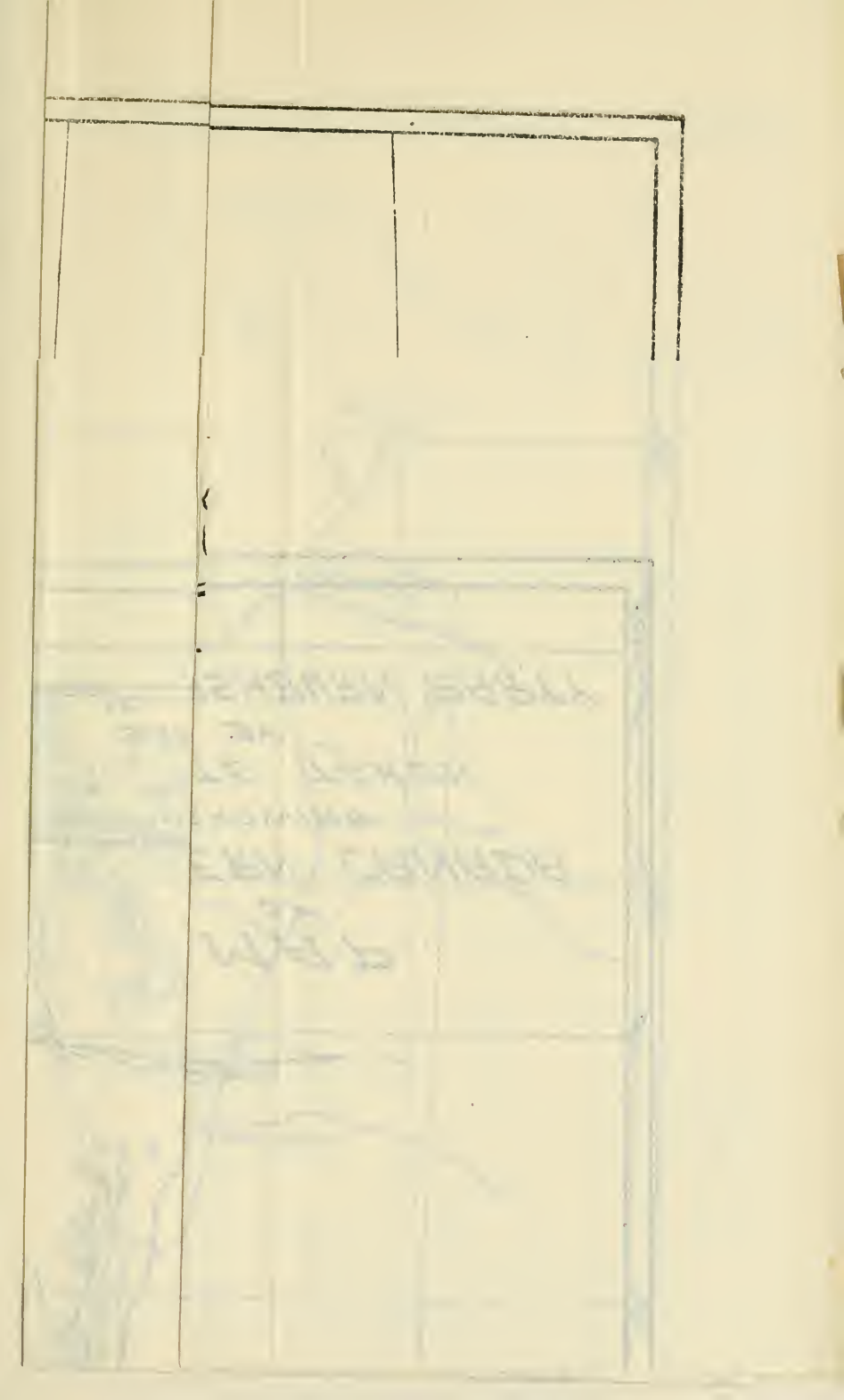

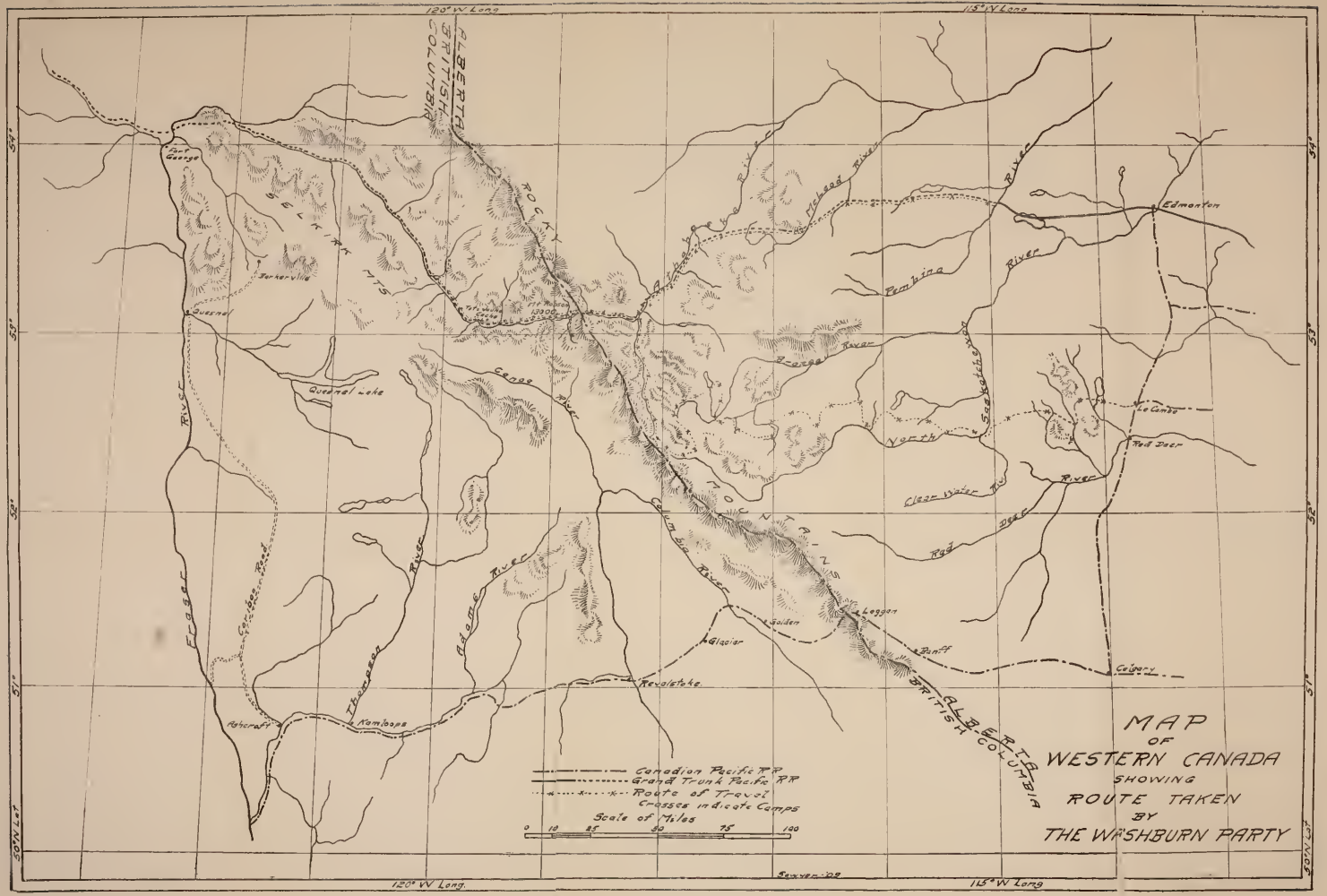
MAP
OF
WESTERN CANADA
SHOWING
ROUTE TAKEN
BY
THE WASHBURN PARTY
Canadian Pacific R.R.
Grand Trunk Pacific R.R.
Route of Travel
Crosses indicate Camps
Scale of Miles
0 10 25 50 75 100
120° W Long.
115° W Long
50° N Lat
51°
52°
53°
54°
ALBERTA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
SELKIRK MTS
Fort George
Barkerville
Quesnel
Quesnel Lake
Fraser River
Cariboo Road
Ashcroft
Kamloops
Thompson River
Adams River
Canoe River
Columbia River
Revelstoke
Glacier
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